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ARGOSY



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1930

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Name _____

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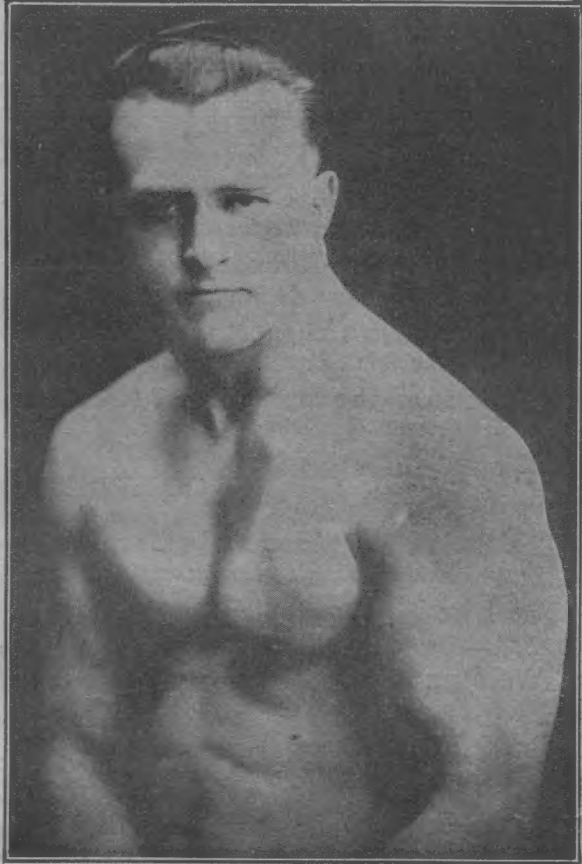
Follow me closely now and I'll tell you a few things I'm going to do for you.

Here's What I Guarantee to Do For You

In just 30 days I'm going to increase your arm one full inch. Yes, and add two inches to your chest in the same length of time. But that's nothing I've only started; get this—I'm going to put knobs of muscles on your shoulders like baseballs. I'm going to deepen your chest so that you will double your lung capacity. Each breath you take will flood every crevice of your pulmonary cavity with oxygen. This will load your blood with red corpuscles, shooting life and vitality throughout your entire system. I'm going to give you arms and legs like pillars. I'm going to work on every inner muscle as well, toning up your liver, your heart, etc. You'll have a snap to your step and a flash to your eye. You'll feel the real pep shooting up and down your old backbone.

You'll stretch out your big brawny arms and crave for a chance to crush everything before you. You'll just bubble over with vim and animation.

Sounds pretty good, what? You can bet your old ukulele it's good. It's wonderful. And don't forget, fellow—I'm not just promising all this—I guarantee it. Well, let's get busy. I want some action—So do you.



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VOLUME 210

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This magazine is on sale every Wednesday throughout the United States and Canada

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publisher, 280 Broadway, New York

MESSAGERIES HACHETTE

3, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4

WILLIAM T. DEWART, President

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE.,

111 Rue Réaumur

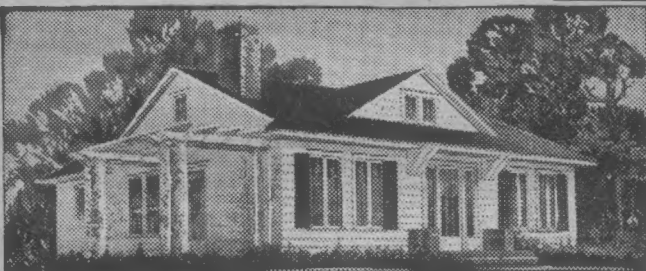
C. T. DIXON, Vice President

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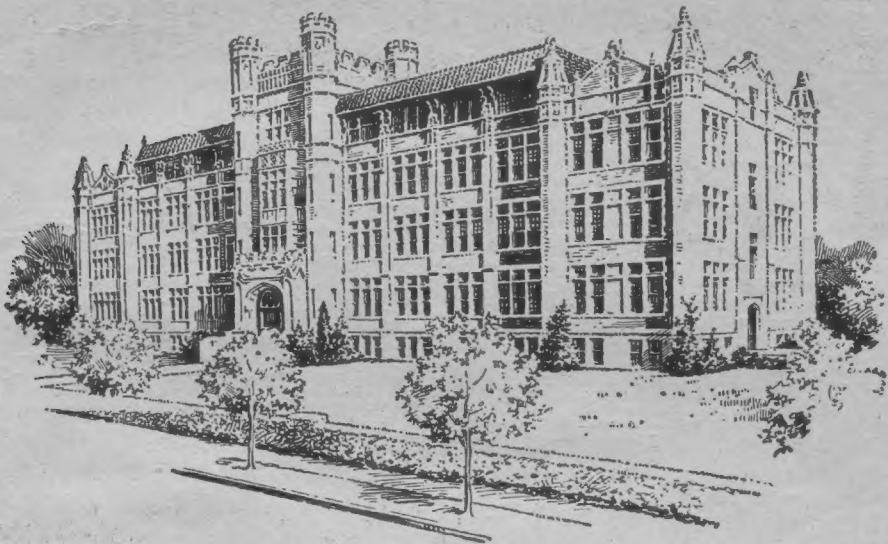
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The six o'clock mystery . . .

Herlock Sholmes and his good friend Batson had noticed the man when he came in at precisely 6:03½ P. M.

"A dangerous looking fellow," murmured Sholmes. "Notice the twitching nerves around his eyes, and the smoldering impatience in every gesture. He'll bear watching . . ."

At 6:27 the man reappeared . . . a beam of loving kindness in his eye, a low jolly whistle on his lips.

"I say, Batson!" said Herlock, "the man must be a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. I never saw such an astounding change in a personality! We must find the cause."

Picture Herlock and his faithful Batson in the man's apartment . . . measuring, digging through

drawers, peering into corners. But pill or powder found they none!

Then Herlock threw open the bathroom door. A tropical warmth still lingered in the air, and the mirror was misted with steam. A splash of water on the floor . . . a heap of damp towel . . . and in the soap dish, a smooth, alabaster-white rectangle.

"Eureka!" he cried, "I have it!"

"Have what?" asked Batson, who never was very bright.

Herlock scorned to answer. He drew a tub . . . he threw off his clothes . . . he tossed the rectangle upon the water . . . and as he slid luxuriously into the steaming bath, he uttered these cryptic words—"It floats."

. . . kind to everything it touches • 99⁴⁴/₁₀₀ % Pure • "It floats"

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ARGOSY

ON SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

VOLUME 210

SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 1930

NUMBER 4



He laughed as he hurled his grenades at the Arab houses

Man Size

Men have joined that dauntless, hard-boiled crew, the Foreign Legion, for many reasons—but none stranger than that which drove Towner Hall across an ocean

By ROBERT CARSE

CHAPTER I.

FIGHTING THE WAR.

IT caught him between the point of the jaw and the ear. Towner Hall went down—hard. He was no coward, and was fighting mad, careless with the liquor in him. He came up,

almost at once, but wide open. This time he took it square on the point of the jaw, his own wild blow missing by inches.

He came to in a jolting taxicab. Ruth was sitting beside him, swabbing at his bruised chin and pounding forehead with a water-sopped handker-

chief. The yellow radiance of street lights flickered through the windows of the cab uncertainly, and in that light he could see her face.

It was calm and, to his great surprise, wholly unsympathetic. She was tending to him very much as a city hospital nurse would take care of any casual drunk brought in as a result of a brawl.

Yet it was not long ago that Ruth had practically told him she loved him—

It was hard for him to articulate, but he at last got it out:

"That's enough with the handkerchief now, kid. I— What the hell happened?"

"Do you really want to talk of that?" she asked, looking away from him and out the window. "There's your hat and stick. Better take them before you forget them."

"Yes." He reached down, picked up the straw hat, quite badly smashed, and some cheap stick which was by no means his own costly malacca.

She turned around so that she faced him fully. "You were drunk as seven hundred dollars—"

"I know it!"

He tried to smile, and his whole face and neck ached.

She went on, as if she had never heard him before. "As soon as you got in that place you started boasting about how you and your outfit won the war."

"I remember that!"

"So do I. . . . There were two or three boys there at the bar whom you fastened on, and one of them was the big Canadian who—who put the bee on you. He paid for the last round of drinks you ordered, and found this taxi for me. . . . Stop right there, at the next canopy, driver!"

Towner Hall turned to her, feeling very angry, but also very weak, sick and confused.

"Now, listen, Ruth. I didn't mean—"

"No doubt!" She patted his hand as a grandmother might. "You could be a nice boy, Towner, and I used to like you. But every time you get more than two drinks in you, you start to fight the war over again—with your mouth. And then you hit somebody, most anybody. . . . You usually scare them out of it, or I stop you, or the barkeeper does. But they fooled you and me to-night. The next time you're out on a bender, you'll be alone; and don't forget the Canadians were in the war, too!" Gently she placed a hand against his shoulder, exerted a firm, quiet pressure, and then slammed the door of the cab. "All right, driver!"

THE cab rattled on. Towner Hall cursed. He smashed what was left of his seven-dollar straw hat, and belabored the cheap stick against the canopy stanchion until it was a jagged splinter in his hand—dimly realizing how cheap and ridiculous he was making himself. The night elevator man was grave-faced and obsequious, as he was paid to be; and on the way up the man said nothing, kept his glance fixedly on his signal button panel.

"Good night, sir," said the man as they reached Hall's floor.

"Good night."

It took Towner several minutes to unlock his door; his left hand was skinned and sore, also.

He looked down at his once-gray flannel suit. It showed how he had mopped up most of the speakeasy floor.

Wearily he cursed, starting to strip off his clothes as he entered his bed-

room. On the wall, framed, was his honorable discharge from the Army; close by, a picture of himself and George Hollis, that time on leave in London. He took both frames down, put them on the side table with their backs to the room.

One word was echoing through his head as he washed, bathed that jaw with witch hazel—the smell of which made him shudder—then crawled into bed. Goldbrick. He was a lousy goldbrick. Ruth had called him that. And, moreover, he had proved himself that.

Damn it, he couldn't sleep! He lit a cigarette, sat there in the darkness. The war—it was over eleven years ago. He considered himself a "Veteran," a tough guy, hard-boiled, who could stand up to any man. But he knew in his heart that there had been very few fights in his outfit, and only a half dozen where he personally had played a part. That was one reason he had become a—he hesitated, then spoke the words aloud: "Speakeasy brawler." That, and the fact that in the eleven years since he had done nothing but acquire a speakeasy pot, flabby muscles, a double chin. No wonder Ruth had hung the high sign on him.

At last he fell asleep. The midday June sun awoke him. He thought his head would fall off as he got out of bed and went to the bathroom. A shower, a bromide and a few aspirin tablets made him feel that he would at least live until night. A glance in the mirror showed him that with his battered, swollen jaw he couldn't go out and sell bonds to-day, at least.

He got back into bed, picked up the phone, called his principal customer, the man with whom he had started his bender yesterday, before he kept his date with Ruth. It was how most of

his binges began—with customers. This one was also in bed, and talking in a far-away voice. But he liked Hall, and wanted the bonds they had discussed over the second whisky sour. Hall hung up with an order for ten thousand dollars' worth.

He sat there, smoking a cigarette and taking inventory of Towner Hall. He was not well pleased. Then, finally, he called his office, a strange sort of grin on his battered face:

"Towner Hall talking. Let me have Lewis. . . . Hello, Lewis? Towner Hall." He gave the details of the sale and transfer. Then: "Listen, Lewis, I'm fed up; want a vacation. . . . Yes, I want a month. . . . Huh? No, I'm going to take a freighter, get a deck hand's job through my cousin. I've got a paunch on me like Irvin Cobb. . . . Crazy? Sure. Did you ever see a bond salesman who wasn't, Lewis? Where? Oh, somewhere on the other side and back."

CHAPTER II.

PORT OF LOST SOULS.

TOWNER HALL came into the harbor of Marseilles fifteen days later. After everybody else had gone ashore, he stood alone in the feds'le washroom, before the cracked mirror. He was dressed in a pair of paint-splotted dungarees, a torn singlet and heavy work shoes.

Now he stripped to the waist, flexed his muscles, watching himself critically in the mirror the while. The Atlantic and Mediterranean summer suns had browned him quite thoroughly. Two weeks of unremitting pulley-hauley, slaving with a holystone and a chipping hammer, had taken away the speakeasy pot and put sinews on fore-

arms, biceps, and back where there had been flabby flesh before.

He grinned at himself, telling himself silently that he wished that little fool Ruth could see him now.

"Boy," he muttered aloud boastfully, "you're getting man size now!"

Then he washed, shaved and dressed to go ashore in France for the first time in eleven years.

He hadn't planned to get drunk on straight, bitter, fiery cognac, and he hadn't planned to get into a fight as soon as he was drunk. Of course, afterward, he realized that both things had been inevitable.

He had taken this trip for just one purpose—to make himself man size again. Personally, he considered that he was. But he remembered he had considered himself as such for ten years—until he had met that Canadian. What he must do now was to go ashore in this reputedly tough town, find some guy like the Canadian, and discover whether he really was a man size fighter or not.

It happened in a dive off the Cannebière and behind the Bourse, not a block from the center of the city. That was a narrow, dirty and dangerous street. Vice lived and reeked there; men of every nation and breed jostled among the women who were even more polyglot than themselves.

Towner Hall did not like such things—too filthy dirty. But he was a man with a purpose. He entered a stinking little dive and sat down, flaming with the load of cognac that he had picked up in the sedate and charming Café du Commerce, around the corner. Here were perhaps a dozen other men, one or two women of a slightly higher type than those who jammed and enticed outside.

One of the men, he saw, was all of

six feet four, straw-haired, hulking, dressed in clean dungarees and denim shirt, a battered watch-cap on the side of his head. Probably, thought Hall from his slight knowledge of the sea, the man was a boatswain or quartermaster off a Swedish or Norwegian freighter. The straw-haired man, just as drunk as he was, now sat bawling an unintelligible national ditty to the best-looking of the women.

Towner Hall had another cognac, and thought things over. The big squarehead was his man. If he, Towner Hall, late bond salesman, could put that man down, he would truly be man size. . . . Then he would go back to New York, force Ruth to go out with him, pick the biggest and toughest-looking speakeasy bruiser he could find, and while Ruth watched, tear into the guy. Then things would be different—far different. It was all very obvious to his cognac-blurred mind.

Obsessed by his purpose, he got up and walked with surprising straightness over to where the straw-haired man lolled, still singing his song.

"Savvy American?" asked Hall, a bit thickly.

The straw-haired man's song stopped.

"Ja." It was a grunt. "I vas long tam in American sheep. Go vay—I'm singin' song."

"SHUT up!" said Towner Hall coldly, purposefully. "And get up—I want to fight!"

"Oh-hoh!" The straw-haired man laughed, and knocked Towner Hall across the room and down with a playful push in the chest.

The vacationing bond salesman had not expected quite that. But, he must know—

He got up and came back, hands and body ready. The Swede was drunk, and had a racial love of fighting. He swung a wide, but still good-natured, haymaker at Towner Hall's chin; and missed. Hall hit him twice in the face.

The women snickered nervously, edging toward the door. The other customers, used to such things, gave way interestedly. But the owner, a dark, ugly little man who had once done fourteen years in Guiana for an attempted murder, had a deep-seated fear of the police. He shriekingly called upon them to stop, describing them as dirty fools, dogs, camels. He got no response. Towner Hall and the Swede were doing a clumsy dance of hate, locked close and hitting hard to the body and back.

The Swede, much the heavier and stronger man, hurled Hall free from him. He waited, breathing evenly, grinning with the joy of a good fight. Towner Hall scrambled up, rushed in.

The owner of the place, now frantic with fear and rage, picked up the wine bottle he kept near-by and with it hit the American flush across the face.

A great, incredulous curse came from the Swede. He picked up the squirming ex-convict, hurled him with force up against the wall of his dive. Then the owner's nephew, a man with family pride and his uncle's lovely disposition, hit the Swede with a chair, breaking the chair quite badly and putting his victim effectively to sleep.

The *gendarmes* put Towner Hall and the Swedish warrior in the same cell; kept them there for over ten days. In that time the two recuperated, shared their cigarettes, became friends, and learned, from their respective consuls, that their ships had sailed without them. But, in their case, French justice was lenient, and they came forth into

the cool, odorous Marseilles night at the end of two weeks.

In the nearest café they sat down to *choucroute*—the sauerkraut was the Swede's suggestion—warm beer, and a survey of their future. Towner Hall, in one of the café mirrors, had just seen his face. His nose had been flattened very successfully by that bottle blow. For the time being, and perhaps permanently, he was a very ugly man. He commented on the fact to his companion, Ole Hegerson. The Swede grinned consolingly, asked, over his warm beer:

"Vat you do now, Brownny?"

Slowly Towner Hall shook his head. Then, in a broken stream, the words came from him, and for the first time he told some one his entire life's history, fears and hopes; how, being cheated of battle in the war, he had tried to find it afterward, and had found, instead, only tawdriness and disgrace. Ole Hegerson was an understanding man; one who had lived on the sea almost all his life, and had seen many men, even one or two somewhat like this strange, brown-haired American here. He asked, after a time of silence:

"You vant be real man size, hah, Brownny?"

"That's it. I did. And now I've got as much chance of selling bonds, Ole. Oh, what the hell!"

"Brownny, listen—"

Ole Hegerson miraculously did away with a whole slice of ham, plentifully decorated with cabbage, at a gulp.

"What, Ole?"

"You bane soldier. I bane soldier, in my country before I'm sea-goin'. Ve like fightin'. Every tam ve fight ashore, t'row us in th' yug. Tam I fight on sea, skippar log me. But, fight in

French Foreign Legion, officer fellar gif you medal an' pat on back, say, 'C'est bon, Ole! C'est très bon, Browny!' Man size fellar in Legion. My cousin, Holgar Hegerson, he vas—vat's th' vurd—sergeant, Second Regiment. I see him, last time mine ship vas in Casablanca."

OLE HEGERSON was silent, except for his happy gurgles over the *choucroute*. Towner Hall sat motionless in his uncomfortable iron chair, looking out through the café door, past the terrace and its random diners, down the broad reaches of the Rue de Rome. The Legion—*La Légion Etrangère*. The boys who had stopped the gap at Arras when nothing else could. The boys who had fought in Mauretania, Indo-China, Mexico, anywhere, everywhere. A man size outfit, even as Ole had said. The toughest, and best, fighting organization in the world.

Why not? He claimed he was hard; claimed that he was an old soldier, "a veteran of the World War." Of course, it would be damfoolish; he knew enough about the Legion to recognize that. But he was a fool anyhow, or he wouldn't be in Marseilles, wouldn't have his once-nice nose flattened across his face.

Five years. That would bring him out, iron-hard for life, man size forever, at thirty-five. Not a bad age, just the beginning of a man's prime. And he had no one. His folks were dead. Ruth? Ruth had put the bee on him.

"How about you, Ole? You ship with me?"

"Me?" Ole grinned, gulping *choucroute*. "Sure! Vy not? Ve bot' like fightin', boozin', seein' th' vurd! Ja!"

Over at old Fort St. Jean, after two days of cross-examination and close

physical study, the Legion took them in. On both their enlistment papers, the flat-nosed Bulgarian recruiting sergeant wrote: "Former soldier. Present occupation: beach comber." And the Bulgarian made no comment. Many men of their general type had gone before.

There was some slight thrill in that first day for Towner Hall. Despite all the brutally realistic stories about the Legion he had read, he still kept some romantic illusions about the famous unit. They were soon gone.

It was the army again, that was all; and a stricter and better disciplined one than his old war-time outfit. This was, though, he told himself, to him a necessary evil. Out of this unpleasant five years' ordeal he was to emerge man size. There was no romance about that. Maybe there would be, later; but not now.

They remained at Fort St. Jean only two days. Still dressed in their stained civilian clothes, in company with half a dozen other recruits—most of them broken derelicts of Marseilles Old Port—they went aboard the shabby old transport *Fafna*, bound for Casablanca and Morocco.

The rusty packet was jammed with other troops returning to Africa to join their outfits: Senegalese, big, tough, black men, who kept surlily to themselves; Legion *permissionnaires*, men who had gained long leaves in France; a few quiet-appearing little men, casuals among French metropolitan artillery and headquarters outfits, going to Fez, Casablanca, Tunis.

The recruits huddled up on the fo'c's'le-head away from the others. There was very little of the military here; the men had cards, dice, sacks full of red wine. But no one got drunk, very little money was lost, and

no one fought. Hall was secretly disappointed. He had thought the Legion a tough place, at least. His own National Guard outfit, going from Hoboken to France, had raised plentee hell.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST BATTLE.

A MONTH later, though, he somewhat changed his mind. He and the big, eternally good-natured Swede had been separated from the other chaff of recruits and thrust into a seasoned company, composed, their squad-mates told them, of casualties remaining from three companies who had got it hard at the battles of Mousseifre and Rezzas, in Syria.

For three weeks, operating from the subheadquarters of the Legion at Oran, they had slogged at foot-drill, close order tactics; sweated at the loping *pas gymnastique*; jumped in and out of trenches, wildly yelling.

Then, under full pack, they were marched as an independent unit to the huge Camp Bedeau, where the forces of the Legion in Africa gathered for maneuvers. Towner Hall was physically tough, now, tougher than he had ever been in his life. Through the hot sun and dust of the blazing Moroccan summer he slogged along with the best of them, head back, eyes slitted against the sun, bawling out the newly learned words of the "March of the Legion."

The men were happy, even the sour old-timers and non-coms. To-morrow was Camerone Day, celebrated throughout the Legion as a holiday, in remembrance of the little band of Legionnaires who had so valiantly fought and died against overwhelming odds in Mexico, years before.

But that marching company never reached Camp Bedeau. When there was still a half dozen kilometer markers between them and the place, they could see far ahead of them on the bleak, dun plain, a cloud of dust, and could hear the roar of a car.

Their captain, Quabic, a blond young Gascon transferred at his own petition from a line regiment, turned from where he stalked at the head of the company column, ordered them off the road, and at ease.

"Back we go!" grunted Groulous, a bandy-legged Greek veteran of the Rif who marched at the American's right. "That's a staff car. And look—see the big Breguet bombers there? *Mais oui!* And they're loaded with hell and harm, too. Attend to how clumsily they fly."

The staff Renault had come to a stop. Out of it leaped a dandified-looking man with the scarlet *képi* of the infantry and the sleeve markings of a major. Quabic, the company commander, snapped to the salute; the company jerked stiffly upright, pieces at the present. The staff officer's white-gloved hand flashed back the salute.

"Put them at the position of rest, *mon capitaine.*"

The men relaxed thankfully, watching with curious, wondering eyes as Quabic and the major walked off behind the dusty Renault. In a minute or so they reappeared, shook hands. Quabic saluted. The staff major returned it, and jumped into the Renault, already in gear and heading about toward Bedeau.

Quabic waited until the roar of it had died away. Then he spoke, hands negligently on his sword hilt and Sam Browne half:

"It is for us a bit of fighting. Taif-kilesh has just been attacked by a great

harka, under the Mad One, Ibn Waid. Three other companies of the Second are already on their way out from Bedeau. But we have the luck; we are first. *Allons!*"

They went, all the rest of that day, marching like one perfect machine toward that attacking band of fanatics, until night came. They took only a ten-minute rest period in every hour. Far behind them, as they topped one rise, Marceret, the senior lieutenant, had seen a troop of Spahis on the road.

QUABIC, Marceret, and the company entire, decided then that no troops, mounted or foot, were going to beat them into the relief of the post at Taifkilesh.

None did. They entered the pass that led up to the frowning, battlemented old caravan city of Taifkilesh in the bitter-cold hour of dawn. Ole Heggeron, himself near exhaustion, and the company first-aid man were dragging the fainting form of Towner Hall, the man who proposed to be man size, between them. Abruptly, they stopped doing that.

Out from the shadowy boulders of the trail ahead, Ibn Waid's snipers had let go with their Mausers at Quabic's point men. A stab of sound came from the Gascon's whistle, and the point fell back, crawling down the trail, aching to shoot, but without the order to do so yet. That came in a minute or so, as Quabic ordered a right and left flank deployment.

That deceptive darkness aided the Legion as well as it did the Bedouin marauders. Two corporals with an auto-rifle apiece, three old privates, with rifle-grenade attachments on their Lebel's, started things, working from the flanks. Then the main column, in answer to Quabic's whistle blast,

surged up the notched trail, and were through, safe on the other side, with only five casualties.

Towner Hall was in the van of that charge. The crack of Mausers, the sharp yells, the thud of grenades, the whistle blasts, had found miraculously some hidden well of reserve power within him. He was, he told himself savagely, the only American in the outfit. He'd show 'em how Americans fought, even if he did pass out on a forced march!

Signals came down from the flankers, high on the sides of the trail. Quabic wiped the blood from a bullet crease in his neck, bawled out clearly:

"Baïonette au canon!"

The old-timers chuckled as they rasped forth the long bayonets, snapped them into place on the hot Lebel barrels. This Gascon Quabic, he loved fighting with the blade! Then, another order, and one the veterans had already anticipated:

"Au pas gymnastique!"

Towner Hall had been under German artillery fire for days at a time in France. He had seen men, buddies, killed right alongside him in their fox-holes near the gun emplacements. But never had he experienced a direct rifle fire from men he could not even see.

He felt suddenly sick at his stomach, and awfully afraid. Through his brain, as he charged mechanically forward, his hob-nailed *brodequins* clattering over the rocks of the trail, a dozen visions of slow and awful death ran. If he got it through the stomach, or the groin, or—

A specter of a man, half-naked, screaming, leaped up at him through the bluish dawn light.

"Hruh-uh!"

Then he cursed, right foot hard down on the squirming body, for, in

his frightened frenzy, he had stabbed too hard, snapped the bayonet in half against the spine.

There was blood on his hands after he had tugged the Lebel clear, and no more visions raced before his eyes. He was a killer now, a killer. Let 'em come!

They did, a mad swarm of them, using Mausers, scimitars, old muzzle-loading carbines their grandfathers had captured on caravan raids, and new Lebel's they had taken that day from stiff Legion hands.

But they lacked the zest and knowledge of the bayonet that the Legion had. Also, they possessed no auto-rifles or grenades. Quabic took ninety-five of his company through intact, threw them down among the boulders, and ordered a raking salvo of fire on the dim white walls of the city before them.

DAWN startled them with its sudden red flame. Wounded men croaked in the French of the Legion to be pulled in out of the open, the sun. Quabic went crouching from boulder to boulder, man to man. That square, new, white building there, standing out from the rest, was the Legion *poste*. The tricolor was still there; some of the Legion garrison must still live. In the company must go, then—for all that Ibn Waid had a good five hundred tribesmen inside the walls.

As best he might, Quabic laid down a barrage with the auto-rifles and skillfully flung grenades. They blasted a jagged hole in the thick white wall, then slapped a stream of Cauchat lead through it. In a moment, now, they must attack.

Towner Hall mumbled to himself where he knelt behind a boulder

shared by Hegerson. With fumbling fingers he was taking a bayonet from a dead man's Lebel, replacing his own shattered one. He was panting, although he had done nothing but this for twenty minutes. There was a red haze over his eyeballs; splashed blood from the tribesman he had bayoneted had dried on his browned face, flecked across his flattened nose.

Big Ole Hegerson, himself calm and stoic, watched his *copain*, his partner, closely. If he did not know this man well, he thought amusedly, he would think him the toughest species of camel in the Legion.

"Up!" That was Quabic. "Up!"

Up, and in, scrambling, tripping, falling, rising, they went. As the leading dozen pounded through that gap, Ibn Waid's warriors let them have it from the houses flanking the wall.

The man in front of Towner Hall put his hands to his groin, as if some one had kicked him, screamed, coughed blood, died. Behind that body, the American dropped. The man had been a grenadier; his canvas pouch was close beside him.

"Thanks, *copain*," husked Towner Hall, and reached into that grenade bag.

Then he stood up, there to one side of the shattered gap in the wall, a fine target in his sweat-darkened khaki. Mauser bullets whacked in a vicious storm from the right and from the left. He pulled the safety ring on the first grenade, quietly counted out the three seconds, lobbed the thing overhand.

There was a small, latticed window above the balcony on the house at the right. There his first bomb exploded, and the whole side of the house seemed to cave in. He laughed, and let the house to his left have one, another, a third.

Cursing Legionnaires were scrambling through the gap in the wall behind, ducking close in against the house walls, working along the dark pocket of a street toward the white-walled Legion *poste*. Hall was in their way, blocking their entrance. A corporal pushed at him, cursed him aside. Well, if that was what they wanted—

He reached down for his Lebel, automatically tried the bolt. The breech block was jammed somehow; he had dropped hard, he remembered. To hell with it, then! These tin apples were the stuff for the troops, all right.

He went up that street, walking in the cobbled, sewage-stinking center of it, heaving grenades at every window and door he saw. After a time he was crawling over the shambles he himself had created, and there was no more firing at him.

HE laughed. This damn' place looked like the Arabian Nights.

He'd never seen a town like this before—old, dirty, but charming. What were they like inside? He tried one huge, dark door. Locked. Well, he had his last grenade. He pulled the ring, jumped back, flat against the nearest wall.

Whram!

The door, and half of the front wall in addition, were open to him. He went in. An old man with a white beard and a scimitar sprang at him from the darkness of an inner room. He kicked him on the knee cap with his excessively heavy boot, picked up the scimitar, slit the owner's throat with it and clumped forward.

A courtyard with a fountain, lime and lemon trees, was before him, and a negro slave in a blood-stained garment. Hall shouted, waved the scimitar, and the negro vaulted a half door

in the back of the place, was mysteriously and swiftly gone.

Towner Hall laughed. This was how the Vandals must have felt when they cracked down on Rome!

He jerked his head aside, and the bright little dagger twanged off the plastered wall. Then he saw the girl, and ran after her, trapped her in a corner behind a huge flowering plant. She was young, pretty, he saw. Something like Ruth.

She clawed, kicked, screamed, and he laughed at her, the bloody scimitar still in his left hand.

"Halte-là!"

Towner Hall turned, laughing. "Aw, go to hell, will you?"

It was Loeffler, the fat, square-faced German corporal from the other platoon, a Cauchat gun held at his hip, three privates behind him. Hall turned back to the girl, who had stopped her screaming and writhing. Then Loeffler hit him over the back of the head with the hot Cauchat barrel.

TOWNER HALL blinked open one eye to see Ole Hegerson gloomily trying to roll a cigarette out of the black native leaf. Hegerson looked down at him, gravely shook his head, took from his side the big half-gallon issue canteen. He held it steadily while the American drained off the weak ration wine.

"Who smacked me?"

"German feller—Loeffler. He tell skipper you vas looter. Quabic, he laugh lak hell, tell Loeffler, 'shove off.' Quabic, he seen you goin' down street vit' grenades. He was goin' gif you medal, so Marceret say. Now he can't."

"But say, I was nuts! It was my first battle. . . . What's this dump?"

"Alongside the *poste*. We pull 'em

all out, all ride. Our company stay here, rest go back. But, Ibn Waid, he's got away, someveres."

"So the skipper was thinking of maybe citing me for a medal until this donkey of a German corporal lugged me in cold, hey?"

"Ja."

"Give us the canteen again, Ole. Say, I could have used that medal. Wait till I get that fat bum some night; I'll ruin him."

"Yer face, shud it. Loeffler's a corporal, an' tough guy. He's been in Legion fourteen year'."

"Yeah? I've been in almost five weeks, but I can *minee* his *dinee*, bend his button, any time I get the chance!"

"Shud up. Ve go on vatch, t'ree hours."

"All the same, I'm getting to like this Legion," mumbled Towner Hall, and then fell asleep.

Down, out from Taifkilesh and the bleak Atlas, back onto the rough Rif-fian plateau, went the Spahis, the mountain batteries and the battalion of the Legion which had come to the succor of the beleaguered post. With them they took the survivors of the original garrison, some dozen shaken, white-faced men.

In their stead, Quabic's company remained. After all, argued the general staff, the Gascon's company had dashing-ly taken the place back from the Mad One, Ibn Waid, and were fully entitled to the possession of it.

For a time, with the self-complacency of victors, the marching company thought the same. But only for a time. Taifkilesh was a bad town. And with the passing of the brief Atlas summer, it became a terrifically cold and uncomfortable one.

In keeping with their general colonial policy, the general staff had not or-

dered the evacuation of the city by the townspeople who had fought so well on the side of the Mad One. Let them—so Captain Quabic's confidential orders read—relearn the efficiency and permanence of French military rule. That, mused Quabic grimly, was all right, if you were not the one who was sitting personally on top of the volcano.

The townspeople were a hard and stubborn type; hated the French, always would. Perhaps seven thousand of them still lived in the snow-locked city, although, thanks to the sly, thorough work of Ibn Waid, the Mad One, no caravans or trade of any sort came into the bazaars and streets.

Starvation and lack of trade, knew Ibn Waid, were always good elements in the makings of a successful revolt. In the spring, with the going of the cold and snow, when the trails were open again, he would be back.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAD ONE STRIKES.

MEANTIME, Quabic's company of the Legion waited, waited, living in discomfort and cold from day to day. There was little or no heat in that post. Men off duty were strictly ordered not to leave the protection of their own barbwire entanglements. Even the working parties, the wood and food details, went out accompanied by two squads of grenadiers and auto-rifle men under a sergeant.

Once a month, a big Breguet bomber from down-country dropped them mail, papers and French cigarettes. That was all. Except for the steady growth of the *cafard*—the sensation of being fed up, almost to the point of

madness—among the more restless members of the company.

Christmas came, and Quabic, an understanding man, saw that all details except guard duty were abolished for the day, and, also, that the men off duty got a cup or so apiece of the powerful Martinique issue rum. That took them out of themselves for a little, and they sat on their bunks in the bare, clean barracks, talking, singing, reading, playing cards.

Towner Hall sat away from the rest of them, in a corner, roughened hands clamped about his chin. *Le cafard* had hit him far worse than the other men of the files. He was a different and higher type than they, had more imagination and intelligence.

For weeks now he had suffered that terrible sensation that he was a squirrel in a cage, or a man locked in some dark cell, where the walls were slowly, steadily closing in on him. For him, there was no outlet—not even the chance to get drunk. In the homesick, bitter condition he was now in, even Ole Hegerson bored and angered him.

If he could talk with Marceret, Quabic, men of his own mentality, it would be all right. But not in the Legion. Here, a lousy corporal like Loeffler rated a salute. That reminded him, and he looked up.

The strapping, ugly Brandenburger had come into their platoon barrack room from his own, sat now with his meerschaum pipe between his thick lips, playing *minee-dinee* with Groulious, the old Greek private.

Hall scowled as he watched the two. Groulious was losing what few francs he had, and the corporal was cleaning up. A taut sort of smile came over Hall's battered face. He had been waiting for months to get back at that dog for braining him. Now was his chance.

In the bottom of his knapsack, wrapped in a piece of rubberized silk, was a wad of ninety francs, all he had left of the money he had brought to France with him. He took it out, stuck it within his wide blue waist-cloth and clamped across the concrete floor to where the corporal and the baldheaded Greek sat playing out their last hand.

It was a simple game, this *minee-dinee*, brought into the Legion by the great number of German recruits. Hall knew it well, remembering the very similar high spade game of his American army days.

Now old Groulious lost, cursed, flipped over his last few centimes and got up. Loeffler let go a grunting laugh:

"You dogs of the second platoon are bum gamblers, *non?*"

NOBODY answered that remark directly. Loeffler was a corporal, and although non-coms had no right to gamble with enlisted men, Quabic permitted it once in awhile. But, to talk back to Loeffler now would be foolishness. While the Brandenburger was in the other platoon, all non-coms stood together in the Legion, and for an enlisted man to have a brawl with one, was to have a brawl with all of them.

"I get no customers?" persisted Loeffler. "What an outfit!"

"Yes!" Towner Hall stood above the big German, still seated on the edge of Groulious's cot. "I'll play with you, my swanky hero! Deal them."

Loeffler looked up, his tiny, china-blue eyes darkening. It was known throughout the Legion that he, when the First and Second Regiments had gone to France at the outbreak of the World War, had been left behind, with the rest of the Germans in the Legion.

During those four years, in the tribal raids and battles in Africa, he had gained two colonial decorations, the Order of the Star of Benim, and the Order of the Black Swan. When he was off duty and had three or four drinks, Loeffler was prone to boast about those medals.

"Ah," he muttered, "it is Hall, the looter! The man who won the war for America, and succored Taifkilesh for the Legion. No, I do not gamble, even at *minee-dinee*, with lousy looters and second-class privates who can't spit clear of their chins."

There was a clash of *brodequin* hobnails over the concrete floor, and Ole Hegerson had the American's tensing arms tight in his own.

"Stand back, *copain*," he whispered to Hall softly. "Stand back." Then he flung out his chest, drew himself up to his full, square six feet four of lithe strength.

"Maybe *mon caporal*," he asked quietly, "will look at another second-class private, who can spit over his chin, and has won no wars, looted no towns?"

Corporal Erich Loeffler was a big man, and a tough one, but he had seen this smiling Swede in action with the bayonet and rifle butt. He forced himself to be quiet, remain on the cot edge.

"*Mais non!*" he rumbled. "I do not gamble with Swedes. They are too thick, too slow. As for you, scum, come on!"

Hall's face was deeply lined, savage with eagerness, as he strode forward.

Every man in the two platoons off duty gathered to watch that game. It lasted half an hour to the minute. Corporal Erich Loeffler won every hand, and every sou and centime. When the American drew a king for his card, the corporal invariably drew

an ace. When Loeffler drew first, and pulled a comparatively low card, Hall would flick forth a deuce, or trey.

At last, Loeffler wadded up the money, thrust it inside his tunic, got up.

"You are bad gamblers, you dogs of the second platoon," he said, and did not smile. Men gave way for him, and he started slowly for the door of his own barrack.

"*Mon caporal!*" called Ole Hegerson, striding a pace or so after him. The big corporal was thick-witted enough to halt and turn. "Take that money," went on Hegerson, a wide grin on his face, "and mail it to the long-lost papa, Kaiser Wilhelm, and maybe then you will get another colonial decoration to show the wriggle-wriggle girls!"

"*Machache!*" bawled Loeffler, and his big fists came up.

"*Machache!*" echoed the Swede in a piping, mocking voice. "The big hero of a corporal would not strike a thickhead of a second-class recruit, though, would he, darling? For then the captain might take the darling's stripe away, and the Atlas would be lost to France!"

Above all things, Loeffler loved the power his corporal's warrant gave him. And the days of corporals hitting privates were long over in the Legion. He sputtered and cursed, waved his fists, and then went on into his own barrack, while the entire second platoon hooted and howled at him.

A WEEK later, the first of the spring rainstorms came and Ibn Waid, the Mad One, struck in with the speed and stealth of a leopard.

Quabic was a good soldier, and was not to be caught as his predecessor had been. Into the streets leading away

from the *poste*, he sent twenty men, grenadiers, auto-rifle men and three machine gun crews with Hotchkisses. From behind sandbag barricades they raked the streets and houses, piling up the fierce mountain warriors and townsmen like sheaves of wheat. That stopped a direct frontal attack for the time being, at least.

But, with the coming of darkness, it would be a different thing. Barefooted sharpshooters could sneak up over the roofs and snipe those twenty men with ease and safety. Quabic recalled them, reluctantly.

Inside the compound, he and Marceret and the adjutant, a rough little bandy-legged Corsican, talked out the situation. It was, they decided in the end, impracticable to anchor a permanent patrol in that commanding position at the heads of the streets leading away from the fort. But, for complete safety, and to hold off a very possible raid by men carrying dynamite, a mobile patrol would have to circulate outside the *poste* all night.

The Corsican adjutant asked for and received command of that patrol. From both platoons he picked his men, among them, Groulous and Ole Hegerson, the latter famous already as a powerful and skillful bayonet fighter. Quabic personally swung open the gate for them, and they went out.

On the catwalks about the walls, every other man in the place stood to, a rifle grenadier and rocket man between every five riflemen. Because of the detailing of the patrol and the rocket men, the platoons and squads had been mixed up. Privates from other squads stood to under the command of non-coms not their own.

Towner Hall, hunched low beside his embrasure, in which his Lebel rested, was very much aware that Loeffler,

the Brandenburg corporal, was for the night in command of him.

Hours dragged interminably. The city lay in complete silence. From time to time, Quabic had coffee passed up to the men standing to on the catwalks. Otherwise there was small break to the monotony, except to listen, listen.

It was Towner Hall's first experience at such a task, and his nerves were tightly drawn; he believed that he could see or hear anything that was humanly possible.

Seeming unreal and afar off in that weird light, the minaret of the city mosque, then the flat roofs of houses emerged as the sun flamed behind the mountains. Old-timers hitched at their belts and felt again to see if their cartridge pouch flaps were open. This, always, was the hour of attack, of uncertainty.

There it was—

"Allah! Allah, l'il Allah 'Akhbar!"

Guns smashed. Men yowled, screamed. Quabic and Marceret ran along the catwalks.

"Hold it—hold it! Let the patrol take care of it, then get in. No rockets, no grenades. Prepare for salvo fire!"

BELOW, a grenade slammed; a Cauchat stuttered death. They leaned carelessly down over the wall, trying to hear, to see.

"Baïonettes! Aux baïonettes!" The voice was that of the bandy-legged Corsican, ending in a choking, unintelligible cry. Then: "*Sauve qui peut*—Save yourselves!"

Many men were running, shooting, stabbing below the walls. Quabic rapped an order for a rocket. It soared, sputtered, broke in bright yellow light. Men stripped to the waist, men in bur-nooses and in shaggy camel-hair

cloaks, were swirling in a mad stampede toward the walls. There was no sign of the patrol there.

"Let them have it!"

For five terrific minutes, they did. "Cease firing!"

They threw forth the empties, reloaded, snapped the bolts into place, waited, listening. Wounded and dying men crawled, kicked and called out down below. Then there came a silence. What had happened to the patrol? Man whispered it to man.

Down there, Hall heard a scraping sound, a rustle of cloth over stones, over grenade-scarred earth. A low call came; was repeated. Hall just withheld himself from yelling aloud. That had been the voice of his buddy—Ole Hegerson, the great Swede!

Loeffler, auto-rifle in his hands, pushed Hall aside from his embrasure, leaned down at it, staring through into the vague space.

"*Halte-là!*" he husked. "*Qui va là?* Who goes there?"

"Shut up, you fool!" cried Hall in a choked voice. "Didn't you hear him? It's my buddy, Hegerson!"

The corporal paid Hall no attention. Again he called:

"Who goes there?"

Below, there was only the slight scrape of a dragging body, the uneven panting of a man's breath.

Loeffler, before Hall could grasp him by the throat and wrench up and back the auto-rifle, let go a savage burst directly at the spot those sounds came from. Men on either side jerked the crazed American away. Marceret rushed down the catwalk, snapped a Very pistol, sending a rocket high up over the walls.

Hall did not see it; he was being led, arms above his head, to a cell below. But there, huddled against the wall,

were two men in the khaki of the Legion, one sprawled figure smashed with the awful spray of an automatic rifle.

At eight o'clock Quabic led a sortie out himself. He lost a man, but brought in the Corsican adjutant, three bullets through his tough body; the Greek, Groulous, near death from a scimitar slash in the thigh; and the riddled corpse of private of the second class Ole Hegerson.

Men who had been on the wall beside Loeffler and the American told what they had seen and heard. With his forceps the surgeon brought forth two bullets from the Swede's body. There was no doubt about it; they were regulation Cauchat rifle slugs.

THAT afternoon, after Ibn Waid's four amazingly fierce frontal attacks had been smashed and beaten back, Captain Quabic held what looked very much like a military court of investigation in the compound.

Hall, still a bit out of his head, was brought from his cell. He screamed and shouted, waved his bound hands, called the statue-like and expressionless Loeffler a murderer, promised that he would kill him at the first opportunity. In a mad, high voice he related to the staring ring of men the details of the *minee-dinee* game on Christmas Day, and more thoroughly, but just as incoherently, the details of the past night. Then he collapsed, sobbing, writhing, and Quabic ordered the surgeon to lead him back to his cell.

Quabic questioned Groulous next. As the wounded man told his story, men's eyes darkened, steadied on the mask-like face of Loeffler.

Hegerson had come upon him, Groulous, half-submerged by a pile of dead, after the second attack of Ibn

Waid had split the patrol apart. He, Groulous, had not been able to walk. Upright and swiftly, Hegerson had carried him. When underneath the wall of the *poste*, the Swede had let him down, crouched down beside him, and called out softly, so as to attract the attention of the men on the walls, but not that of the tribesmen skulking among the dead behind them.

A voice—Loeffler's voice—had answered Hegerson. The Swede had called again, asking the same thing, to have the gate opened for them. Loeffler had called back once more, demanding who went there, and to halt. Hegerson had feared to call out any more; he and Groulous had both heard what they knew to be Ibn Waid's warriors creeping close to them from among the piles of dead.

"That was all, *mon capitaine*," concluded Groulous, "except that on Christmas Day, Hegerson and the corporal had had words, and the Swede had dared the corporal to hit him, which the corporal did not, either out of fear, or something else. . . . But—down there—we were sprayed with Cauchat lead!"

Half a dozen other men were questioned by Quabic. For fifteen minutes he cross-examined the hulking corporal, Marceret joining in now and then.

The motives in the case almost exactly balanced one another, the two senior officers at last decided. That there was bad blood between the American, Hall, and the corporal, and also very possibly between Hegerson, Groulous and the corporal, was undoubted. Hall was not in a rational state; his testimony could not be taken literally. Nor could Groulous's. And private of the second class Ole Hegerson was dead.

The testimony of the other men who had been near by on the catwalk was conflicting. Some had heard a voice before Loeffler had shot; others had not. Those that had heard were not sure whether the voice was that of Hegerson, or even that it was in French, they declared.

And the corporal, in that crucial time of battle—uncertain, as he himself swore, of hearing any voice in French at all—had been fully justified in shooting.

He was exonerated and dismissed, with an implied warning to be more careful in the future.

CHAPTER V.

FACE TO FACE.

QUABIC, mounting the signal tower that afternoon to where the heliograph apparatus stood, had flashed a message to the next post to the north, to be relayed on to headquarters.

The commanding officer of the Twenty-Seventh Marching Company had wished to report a successful defense of the post at Taifkilesh, with the loss of nine dead and three wounded; approximate enemy losses, two hundred and fifty dead and wounded. Also, the commanding officer had respectfully submitted his petition for the withdrawal and transfer of the Twenty-Seventh Marching Company from its present post as soon as it would be possible to effect the withdrawal.

There had been, decided Quabic, as he signaled "All Through, Thank You," enough doubt in the death of Private Hegerson, to make a transfer of the company worth while, in view of all the circumstances.

The Legion could fight the enemy forever, but not *le cafard*.

So it was that a few weeks later, in the streets about the Legion post of Taïfkilesh, a metropolitan company of sappers was busy dynamiting and laying waste all the houses within a thousand yards of the battle-scarred place. About them patrolled a company of red-fezzed Senegalese, eyeing the glowering townspeople with calm, confident insolence. Inside the fort, the dusty relieving company, which had just arrived in response to Quabic's order, stood at ease under full marching pack, awaiting the slight formalities that went with their taking over.

On the other side of the compound, the grinning men of the Twenty-Seventh were falling into ranks. Behind them, against the wall, were nine new, neat graves, holding their dead of that last battle.

Beside one grave knelt private of the second class Towner Hall, wan and thin from his weeks of prison. Slowly his fingers ran over the headstone inscription, which he himself had slowly chipped out in his cell. There, at the top, was the Mohammedan crescent and star that went on all Legion graves. Below, the name—Ole Heger-son—and the dead man's rank and date of death. At the bottom, the famous Legion inscription: "*Tombé devant l'ennemi.*"

Towner Hall was calm, and sane now. But those last words brought a sudden flare of anger up through his body to his brain.

"'Fallen before the enemy,' hell!" he said softly. He stood up, and at the peak of his *képi* his fingers snapped in the salute. "So long, buddy! So long, guy!"

The Twenty-Seventh's bugler was blowing the assembly. Hall picked up

his Lebel from where it leaned against the wall, fell into rank. Quabic's sword flashed; the relieving captain's sword flashed. Out through the gates they had so well defended, the Twenty-Seventh marched, bawling the "Song of the Legion."

Once Towner Hall looked up, and ahead, toward the tail of the first platoon, where a familiar hulking figure swung. Above the collar of his cloak, Corporal Erich Loeffler's neck was red and beefy. Right there, decided Hall almost smilingly, he would some day put his bullet.

They sent the Twenty-Seventh Marching Company down into Sidi bel Abbes, the main depot of the Legion, into what amounted to rest billets, there to await orders.

Those on paper work at company headquarters whispered the news that the outfit's number was up for duty in Tunisia. Men smiled at that. Tunisia had long been a quiet place. There was no need for roughnecks there. From Tunisia they would undoubtedly be shipped on to French Syria. That was where the Jebel Druse and the fun lay.

Towner Hall cared little about that. He was intent on vengeance, on an opportunity to stand chest to chest with Corporal Erich Loeffler. His chance came one night, in that period of freedom after supper, between half-past five and recall, at nine o'clock. Alone—for he had chosen no new buddy in place of the great, grinning Swede—he went down into the *maïdan*, the native quarter, of Sidi bel Abbes.

ON his way he passed through the main square of the place. Here, against the semi-Oriental background, was transplanted a touch of Paris. There were a few shops holding

Parisian goods for the officers and their wives; the cafés had awnings, iron tables and chairs beneath them, out on the sidewalk.

The American, square, alert, newly shaved and in freshly washed khaki, every button and strap end polished, clumped by in his heavy issue *brodequins*, coming snappily to the salute as he passed officers of various units. Then he saw before him, seated at a table before the biggest and best café, something that made him suddenly stop still.

It was an American girl—blond, small, delicately trim, and dressed as only an American girl could dress. For a terrible moment he stood in doubt, believing her to be Ruth. Then he saw that she was not Ruth, that she was far prettier than Ruth had ever been. The sight of her brought back sharply to him all that he had lost, wilfully thrown away to be here. It seemed like an age since he had seen a woman like that, one of his own race, his own class. In reality, though, he told himself bitterly, it was only a matter of months!

Almost involuntarily he moved across the crowded sidewalk, dropped down into a corner table where no one else sat, just so that he could sit there, revel in watching her profile, her smile, her gestures with head and hands. God, he had more than four years yet to do before he could go back!

Behind him a mongrel waiter padded up, and Hall could feel the man's nervous breathing on his neck.

"*Un pernoud*," Hall ordered mechanically.

"But no!" rasped the waiter sharply. "Men of the Legion are not permitted near this place. Go, or I must call the police!"

Towner Hall spun around in his chair.

"I ordered a *pernoud*, species of a camel!"

The waiter shrugged, called Hall a stubborn, unclean dog, and moved off toward the sidewalk and a big Senegalese on military police duty. The American knew what that meant: to that there was only one outcome.

He got up, tugged at the peak of his *képi*, and swung out of the place, but so directing his course that he went close to the table where that girl sat.

As he passed, he looked down at her with unknowingly hungry, pitiful eyes, and she, having heard the dialogue with the waiter, looked curiously up—only to flush a bit and deflect her eyes. Then full memory returned to Towner Hall; he remembered his flattened nose, the grim, hard lines about his mouth, the ill-fitting khaki of his uniform, the great clumsy boots that rested on his sockless feet. There was too, he suddenly recalled, garlic on his breath from the soup at supper. No wonder she had turned away.

"*Légionnaire! Halte!*"

That was a voice of authority, of command; he had soldiered enough to recognize its tone, and obey it. He turned, boot heels clacking, head coming back, hands down along the seams of his trousers. At the table with the girl were two elderly men attired in their idea of tropical clothing, obviously Americans and some relation to the girl. But there was also, although Hall had been so interested in her that he had not noticed him before, a young captain wearing the tabs and emblems of the staff.

"You are a *bleu*—a recruit?" coldly questioned the staff captain, fingering the fluff of his new imperial. "So green and so stupid that you

know no better than to gape at people, and to enter into cafés where scum of your corps are held out by military law?"

"*Non, mon capitaine!*" Hall was flushing darkly, but his eyes were full on the eyes of the staring girl. "I am of the Twenty-Seventh Marching Company—they who just took, and kept, Taifkilesh. We have just come from battle; I had forgotten the laws made by the staff for the Legion in peaceful towns."

His face was absolutely without expression; even his eyes held no glint of a smile, and his hand had flashed up in a perfect salute.

It was now the staff captain's turn to flush, for the girl and her two American companions were smiling very faintly at the situation.

The captain's fingers tightened about the stem of his sauterne glass; his jaw muscles became rigid. He was, knew Hall, debating whether or not he had the right to turn him over to the near-by and watchful Senegalese. But he did not.

"Dismissed—scum!"

HALL'S hand snapped down from the salute; he did a neat right face, stalked stiffly on down the square. The touch of Paris, of the civilization he had known and that had been his, was now behind him. Here were swart, stealthy men in burnoose and pointed slippers; drunken, brawling Legionnaires; street girls who howled and beckoned from doorways. All symbols of this new life—the life he had willingly chosen. "Scum." Scum!

One girl, haggard, rouged, dressed in a gaudy blue wrapper, flung herself at him hungrily, threw sinewy arms about his neck, pulled his head down.

"Get away!" Sudden nausea and anger were in him. He put the palm of his hand against her chin, pushed hard.

She fell back against the slimy wall, muttering an amazed curse. A beady-eyed man in greasy European clothing rose up from a near-by doorway, came forward, one hand inside his torn shirt:

"Eet ees no vay to treat nice gairl—"

Towner Hall kicked him on the knee-cap; again on the seat of his dirty trousers when he fell, moaning. Nobody else bothered him, although the girl continued to curse and scream at him.

A bottle hurtled out of a dark doorway, followed by a broken chair, then, by a Legionnaire minus his cap and several teeth. The American sidestepped, waited a moment, then entered.

This must be, from the signs, a Legion hangout, where he belonged—now.

The place was jammed, and he saw, through the blue smoke pall, a dozen men wearing the collar numbers of his company.

He squirmed through to the dirty board that passed for a bar, and grasped a bottle of *rake*, the local version of brandy.

He had done away with about a third of it, standing there with his back to the noisy but now good-natured room, when some one slapped him mightily on the back.

He swung, grasping the bottle thoughtfully by the neck. It was old Groulous, and the Greek was drunk—very drunk.

"Look," he burred, taking the bottle and a drink from the American. "Look, dirty-ears. Loeffler, the long-

lost son of Papa Wilhelm, has just come in. Sssh! Easy, now; I just wished to show you him; he is drunker than you, than me, even!"

But it would have taken three of Groulous to hold Hall. Carelessly he pushed men to his right and left, *képi* on the back of his head, tunic collar open, to where the Brandenburger sat with three of his squad.

Loeffler was drunk, but he had been in the Legion fourteen years, and knew only too well what usually happened to a corporal when he went into a drinking dive frequented by privates.

He got up from his mates, stood clear, ready. Hall lurched a step before him, all his hate, all his rage against life in general, and this man in particular, rising in black, violent flame into his brain.

"You," he said thickly, "you killed my buddy, you name of a filthier name! Shot him when he was carrying in a wounded man—Groulous, back there." 'Fraid of him. 'Fraid he'd ruin you. He would 've. He was twice my size. But, so can I—an' I will!"

LOEFFLER'S leathery hands raised; his eyes narrowed.

"Attend," he called to his squad mates behind him. "The man is drunk, accuses me of murder. He will strike the first blow. Before the court you will—"

Then Towner Hall struck at him. Loeffler met that blow with a knee-thrust to the pit of the stomach, his forearms chopping down the American's hook for the jaw.

Hall fell, writhing in terrible agony. Men sprang back, so as to give him room, and to be able to see.

Loeffler stood crouched there, grinning, completely confident. Panting,

moaning with the pain of the effort, Towner Hall dragged himself over that filthy floor toward the waiting man. Inch by inch, he started to pull himself erect.

Corporal Erich Loeffler kicked; a mistake. For the American, dim years ago, had played football. He caught that lashing foot as he would have trapped the foot of a speeding half-back running the line.

Viciously, Loeffler beat at the other's head with his hands, tried to maintain his balance, but in vain, and fell sideways.

Towner Hall was a small man, far lighter, less powerful. But this was the third great fight of his life, and tonight he was not going to be denied. He batted an elbow to the Brandenburger's jaw.

He slipped a rough scissors grip over the squirming body, the thrashing legs, and went to work blindly with both hands on the face.

Loeffler, giddy, brain reeling, tried to hit back, and found his blows blocked by a shoulder.

There was one sure thing left—he jabbed his great, thick fingers in and found the throat at the top of that loosened tunic collar, and there vised them tightly.

Towner Hall gasped and choked, beat mercilessly at the already pulped face. But his strength was going—going—

Up and back with a galvanic effort, Loeffler tossed him, throwing himself clear. The American fell heavily, rolled over, attempted to scramble up. Loeffler kicked him twice in the side and back, saw that he lay still, and ran to the door to call hoarsely for the military police.

Twenty minutes later, two strapping Senegalese conducted across the main

square of Sidi bel Abbas a blood-smirched wreck of a man who moaned aloud at every step he was dragged forward. The bright lights of the well-occupied cafés thrust like knives at his eyeballs, and he jerked the lids back, to see.

Close to his right, and over the shoulder of the Senegalese on that side, he could see a party of four star-

ing people seated at a sidewalk table. One was a slim, white-faced girl, the others, two men in tropic whites, and a lean, graceful and cynical man in the impeccable uniform of a staff captain.

Towner Hall bobbed his head to and fro to clear it; husked out, gawping at them with his terrible face and eyes: "Good evening—scum! Satisfied—now?"

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.



Sleigh Riding in the Tropics

FUNCHAL, Madeira, is probably the only town in the world where sleigh riding is popular when the thermometer hovers around the ninety mark and gorgeous tropic blossoms flutter down on the swiftly moving sleds. For sled-runners are more in evidence than wheels in that island town of perpetual summertime, and the tinkle of "jingle bells" resounds throughout the hottest of afternoons. No, the Portuguese of Funchal own no secret formulae for making ice. Ice in the quaint seaport may be seen in glasses of the famous wine named after the island, not on the narrow streets.

But the streets are paved with little brown pebbles that resemble smoothly polished nuts. And the taxi-sleds, oxen-drawn sledges, push-cart cutters and bobs skid along with all the speed of runners over frozen snow. Sleepy bullock teams haul loads of casks set on iron runners. The Portuguese driver is expert at skidding his sled over the pebbles, steering down steep lanes and around slippery corners and getting tangled in traffic jams. At frequent intervals he stops to grease the runners with a black rag. Uphill the ride is slow, but downhill the queer vehicles slip and slither along at a speed demanding every bit of the driver's skill on the reins.

One of the popular sports of Funchal is to motor to the hill overlooking the town, get into a little cutter, and slide down a maze of crooked, steep lanes to the waterside. A toboggan ride is hardly as thrilling. The victim sits alone in his little cutter; starts down a long, pebble-paved hill. A guide sprints along behind, steering by means of frayed lead ropes. Once the cutter gets under way it makes alarming speed. Puffing, cursing, plying the lead ropes, the guide dashes in the rear, while the sled scoots and bumps over the pebbles, skids around one corner after another, jolts from curb to curb and threatens to escape and go whizzing into some ox-team down the street. An illusion of real winter is created by the tinkle of the cutter bells and the chills of racing downhill in so novel and precarious a vehicle.

Theodore Roscoe.

The Storm That Had to be Stopped

Preston, evil genius of Science, defies America's war weapons as he hurls Nature's malignant forces against his blinded attackers

By **MURRAY LEINSTER**

Sequel to "The Darkness on Fifth Avenue" and "The City of the Blind."

Novelette—Complete

CHAPTER I.

WITHOUT WARNING.

ON the morning that saw the beginning of the Storm That Had to be Stopped, Police Inspector Hines had his life saved by an amateur driver who drove a second-hand flivver into his roadster. It was pure accident, of course. Hines's left mudguard, his left front wheel, and his front bumper were all wreckage when the amateur driver stared wildly about, assured himself that he was still alive, and then burst into tears.

The amateur driver passed forthwith from history. He had nothing more to do with the affair. He merely kept Hines from driving up into the Catskills in the very early morning of August 5, when, as all the world knows, the Storm began.

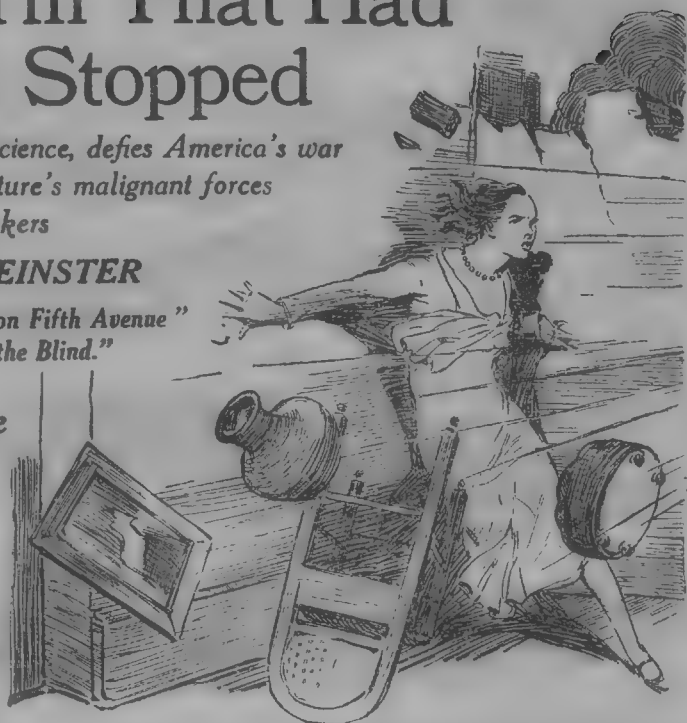
You will remember that morning. There had been a heat wave over all the Atlantic States for two weeks or more. The cities sweltered. The beaches were crowded. In New York, Central Park was opened to any one

who chose to sleep in the open air instead of the stifling tenements.

Those who could leave the city did so. The Catskill and Adirondack hotels were packed. The seashore resorts swarmed with people.

Kathryn Bush was up in the Catskills, and Hines had started up to be with her until Monday. The fact that his car was wrecked in Yonkers almost certainly saved his life, and quite positively determined the events that followed. If he had been up in the storm-center, he would have been utterly helpless.

IT was curious that the storm seemed to start so gently. Kathryn Bush wrote an account of the beginning, for the *New York Star*. It was her vacation-time and she was staying in



She crouched against the fragment of wall that still remained standing



would come at midday when this same sun would be a ball of intolerable fire, hanging overhead in a brazen sky. Irrelevantly, she remembered the weather forecast—fair and warmer.

And then, quite suddenly, the warmth seemed to go out of the sun's rays.

It was as sudden, as abrupt, as the turning off of a light, as the closing of a furnace door from which a fierce glare had poured forth. The sun was no darker, however. It seemed to shine as brightly as before. It did not give off heat.

Kathryn stared about her. She looked back at the sun. It glowed vividly, but it seemed obscurely

the house of Heracles Tribble, at Rose-dale Farm, North Weddensdale, Greene County, New York. She expected Hines to come up, and had risen early. A room was reserved for him at the farmhouse, where there were four other boarders. She may have been sentimental, or she may have been restless. In any event she was looking out of her window when the sun rose.

While birds began to sing abstractedly in the mountain-shadows, long streaks of golden light became visible on the flanks of monster hills. The invisible sun was gilding their sides. Later, a long time later, the red disk of the sun appeared.

The sunlight was gratefully warm after the dawn-chill, though even in the first rays she thought regretfully of the blistering, terrific heat that

to have changed color. She held out her hand to it to catch the warmth of its rays. There was none.

A cloud over its face? No. The sky was wholly clear. There was simply no more heat coming from the sun.

Puzzled, but quite unalarmed, it seemed to Kathryn that the sun's ruddy tint had vanished very suddenly. It even seemed as if instead of a normal gold, the great disk had taken on a faint bluish or greenish tint. The change—if it was a change—was so slight that she could not be sure.

The seeming lack of heat was so extraordinary that, instead of turning away, she gazed and gazed, and presently took a tiny reading-glass and focused it on a bit of paper. The paper should have turned brown and burned luridly. Nothing happened.

More curious still, now, she focused the light upon her hand; then upon the sensitive skin of her forearm. A vivid spot of light formed at the focus of the lens. The speck of flesh seemed white-hot. But there was not the faintest, not the tiniest sensation of heat.

It was at just this time she noticed that a wind was blowing far away. Where she stood at her window, looking eastward, the air was utterly calm. Her window, as a matter of fact, was open wide. But she suddenly saw trees, a long distance off, bending and tossing furiously as if in a gale of wind. There was a long straight stretch of white road reaching far away toward infinity. A cloud of dust was racing along it.

"It's wind!" said Kathryn vaguely.

Still she stared. Then she saw something rolling crazily across a distant pasture. It was a smother of dust and débris. But there was one gigantic, darker object that rolled and rolled. She saw suddenly that it was the top of a tree, sheared off from its trunk in some freak of wind-pressure, and rolling like a monster ball.

The wind struck a farmhouse three miles down the valley. Kathryn saw a cowshed open and vanish. She saw a fence-line disappear. The dwelling leaned and leaned.

It sank quite gently to a sloping mass of wreckage, save that its roof went ballooning off insanely and mowed down a lane of trees through a planted orchard before it crashed against an upward-jutting outcrop of granite and was torn to bits about it.

WHEN the wind struck the house from which Kathryn had watched it, the windows were all down. She had shouted of a storm approaching. Clouds, too, began sud-

denly to appear in writhing, ominous masses. The house had been closed tightly by the agitated Mr. Heracles Tribble, who hastened out to his hen-houses to see to their security before the storm came, and did not come back.

Kathryn watched from the window. The rolling cloud of dust that was the forefront of the wind drew nearer with incredible speed. As it drew close, the monstrous size of the disturbance became apparent. It was hundreds of feet high, and it was rolling over and over upon itself like a monstrous comber.

There seemed even to be striations in it like those the stranding of a rope will make. But there were objects carried in the smoke-colored rolling cloud. Dark objects, of all shapes and sizes. Kathryn, staring and almost paralyzed by sheer astonishment, saw the tree-limbs and it seemed even whole trees caught up in the monstrous turmoil.

Somehow her eyes swept to the hen-houses at the rear of the house. Mr. Heracles Tribble was standing in the open, peculiarly puny and ineffective, staring incredulously at the thing that bore down upon him. He was small, and rotund, and bald. He wore silver-rimmed spectacles, and he stared at a rolling wave of smoke and dust and utter destruction, hundreds of feet high, that swept toward him irresistibly.

Mr. Heracles Tribble turned suddenly, and fled toward the house. Kathryn saw his mouth dropped open in horror. His fat little legs twinkled. He ran with incredible speed. But the rolling cloud of dust and débris had reached the pasture-lot. It touched the hen-houses and they vanished as if blown to atoms.

Unpausing, the monstrous thing came rolling up. Its bellying edge was

over the house while its base had still not yet touched the running little fat man. But then Kathryn saw smoke-like dust envelop him. She saw—or thought she saw—that he rose crazily from the ground. And then the wave of wind struck the house.

It was absurd, but Kathryn was not frightened even the instant after she knew the wind had struck. Her first conscious thought was that the house had been lifted away from around her, leaving her untouched.

Then she realized that the house still stood. There was no roof over her head, to be sure, but the walls remained intact. The feeling of being in the open air came from the fact that without warning or a sound that could be heard above the deafening uproar of the wind, the windows had ceased to be. The glass panes broke out of them with no more disturbance than so many breaking bubble-films would have made.

Kathryn had been at one moment safely housed, behind glass panes. The next instant she was merely sheltered behind a thick brick wall while a dense fog of dust blotted out even the farther side of the room.

Something crashed into that farther wall and kicked feebly. It was a pig, picked up no one could guess where and carried no one can guess how far. Then a tree-trunk thrust itself through the brick wall, horribly splintered, and heaved upward, tearing the wall apart, and then somehow went reeling off into the thick dust-cloud.

KATHRYN put her hand to her throat. Sheer professional training alone saved her from panic. The newspaper woman's acquired instinct said:

"What a story! I've got to get to

safety. It will be a big story when the wind stops—and I saw it!"

She dropped to the floor and began to crawl past the window toward the stairway. Once she ventured a little distance away from the wall, and a solid stream of air—as solid as a board—that came through a window, rolled her over and over until she struck with a crash against the leeward wall.

It held her there, then she battled her way on hands and knees down the stairs. The wind beat at her terribly trying to fling her up again. It came in through the smashed lower windows.

She saw the dining room table flat against the wall. Its top covered a window and it was held in place by the wind-pressure. It was very probably that measure of protection which enabled her to pass so close to the leeward wall without being picked up and hurled off into nothingness.

She heard a terrific crash upstairs, in the room she had just left. Fragments of brick came down the steps. She reached the cellar stairs, tumbled down them, and heard more terrific crashes still.

Then there was darkness, while the wind roared by overhead. The noise the wind made was not a hum, not a whistle, not a shriek. It was a steady, a terrible, deep-toned roar. That roaring of the wind was characteristic, throughout, of the Storm That Had to be Stopped.

CHAPTER II.

IN AN OPEN CAR.

HINES had started out at five o'clock in the morning, in hopes of getting away from the city before the heavy traffic began. But, of course, he turned out to be only one

of many thousands who had the same idea. The heat wave in New York had been terrific. It is recorded that the traffic had piled up as early as 3 A.M., and when Hines started at five he was promptly swallowed up in a long lane of cars going up-State at a bare crawl.

His accident happened just out of Yonkers at a little after six, but it was nine before his wheel was replaced and a new mudguard in position. By that time the Storm had begun.

Down there, quite sixty miles from the storm-center, its development was less spectacular. Up among the mountains it is fairly certain that the wind began at a very few minutes after six. Watches found on victims of the first terrific rush of wind were almost invariably stopped at that hour, and clocks in houses, overturned and crushed, corroborate the figures. But it was nearly half past six when a strong wind began to blow from Yonkers toward the mountains.

The sun was just up. Hines was seething over the delay. He was engaged to Kathryn, and he resented anything that kept him away from her. The Catskills had been his suggestion in the first place. Kathryn, as a feature writer on the *Star*, didn't want to get too far from New York anyhow.

Other matters aside, there was a man named Preston who was rather definitely dangerous and who was still at large. Not less than twice, with his artificial darkness, he had set the whole city of New York by the ears, to his own enormous profit.

Hines, and Schaaf—now up in the Catskills, too, making some abstruse experiments with very short Hertzian waves for the research department of the American Electric Company—Hines and Schaaf had managed to checkmate him each time.

Each time Kathryn had been in at the death, and each time the *Star* had scored a newspaper triumph. With Preston still at large, and both Hines and Schaaf convinced that sooner or later he would try to strike again, Kathryn had not wanted to get too far away even on her vacation. She wanted to handle the next battle with Preston for the *Star* as she had the first two.

Hines moved restlessly about the garage, or scowled at the never-ending but often pausing line of cars that went crawling, crawling, creeping away from the heat of the city.

Those cars were leaving a sweltering city behind them, to steam upon sweltering roads in an atmosphere of exhaust-fumes, but at least they had hopes of reaching the hills and coolness. Instead, only too many of them reached the hills and disaster.

Hines noticed a breeze at twenty after six. At half past it was a wind. At seven, it was half a gale, blowing under a clear sky with a brazen sun already sending down a blistering heat.

Hines swore under his breath, but it was no use trying to hurry the mechanics. He was an inspector of police in the city of New York, but at a roadside garage he was merely a customer, and the traffic outside promised plenty of customers before the day was over.

It was shortly after eight that Hines saw the top of an ancient touring car torn to ribbons by the wind. Before nine o'clock came, he had seen dozens of them.

THE traffic began to thin, abruptly. Cars headed for the mountains turned aside. They began to fight their way into storage garages, battling a terrific, solid mass of air.

Some of them stopped where trees on a side-road promised some measure of protection from the wind. Others were wiser and parked themselves in swarming masses wherever deep cuts or valleys ran across the prevailing direction of the wind.

The galvanized garage roof was a drumming tumult, now, rattling and booming from the wind that went sweeping across it. The mechanics finished Hines's car and very reluctantly opened the doors—closed a half hour before—to let him out.

He came out into a rather incredible world. Trees were leaning toward the mountains. The roads were nearly clear. The traffic had lessened almost to nothing. The noise of the wind was a distinct deep booming sound, to which the tortured trees added shrill whistles and shriller screams, and now and then sharp cracking sounds as limbs or trunks gave way under the intolerable pressure.

Hines turned toward the mountains and shifted gears. They clashed, horribly. It was seconds before he realized that the wind had pushed his car ahead of the motor-speed. He had to race the engine to get into second, and race it again to get into third.

The car seemed to be possessed of unlimited power. It sped toward the mountains like a mad thing. Every man comes to know his motor, but Hines found his own car acting like a thing possessed. With his foot off the accelerator it made forty-five miles an hour. The barest touch on the gas-pedal sent it leaping to sixty, seventy miles.

He saw an ancient flivver turned over, at the side of the road. There were no people near it. He braked, instinctively, and found his brakes nearly useless. His car flashed past,

and he heard the brakes squealing, but felt hardly any diminution of his speed.

There was a ripping sound behind him. His back curtain had blown in. The split upper half of the windshield opened out, and wind poured from behind him out over the front. Another wreck. Two more.

He saw a car coming toward him and passed it with the speed of light, but in the instant of his passing saw the man at the wheel of that other vehicle working frantically at gas-lever and throttle, and it seemed to him that for the fraction of a second he heard the roaring of a motor laboring horribly in low gear, battling against the wind alone.

The road shot into a deep cut, and the abnormal acceleration of the car diminished. Hines jammed on the brakes and stopped with difficulty. The ripped fragments of his back curtain were flapping about him and he got out his knife to cut them away.

Now he felt the wind as a savage, gusty pressure. It was terrifically strong, even down here in a cut some thirty feet deep. Something was stirring in Hines's breast, just then, which he was grimly refusing to recognize. After all, there have been storms and storms. Kathryn, up in the mountains, would be safe enough.

The thin tooting of a horn came to him. A car had drawn aside from the road, some fifty or sixty feet ahead. A man in it was waving to him to come on ahead. Hines merely released his brakes and his car moved sluggishly for twenty feet and stopped. He put it in gear for the rest of the distance.

Here, remarkably, the air was calm. The man in the other car was smoking placidly. Overhead the wind rushed past with its deep, ominous roaring sound. At just this point between the

sides of the cut there was a peffect lee, where no wind-currents of any sort were noticeable.

"I THOUGHT I'd tip yuh," said the man in the other car. "This is the best place I've hit yet. Pull over off the road an' you'll be all right. Better get off the road, though. A car come through here like a bat out o' hell. Turned over at the end of the cut, yonder. The wind's near cross-wise there."

Instinct made Hines ask: "Anybody hurt?"

The man spat.

"Hell! They fell out an' the wind picked 'em up an' carried 'em off somewhere. Ain't it a wind, though? What y' call a hurricane, I guess."

Hines was staring, oblivious. Far, far away, a cloud was forming, but unlike any cloud Hines had ever seen before. Something, the sheer distance of the formation perhaps, told him that it was higher than any cloud he had known. It rose as a vast, incredible column, and then it spread out as a mushroom might spread above its stalk.

"Yeah," said the man in the other car. "It's been like that for half an hour, now. Looks like a volcano cloud, but it ain't. No earth shocks. Just wind. I reckon that's the storm center. It's a peach, this storm. That cloud 'll be over the Catskills, somewheres."

Hines started, and then he turned grimly to his car-top. He slashed at it, wrenching away the cloth and flinging it away.

"I'm going on," he said, rather absurdly.

The man in the other car shrugged.

"I ain't stopping you," he observed.

"But you better stay here. That wind is a hell-cat. If you want your car to stay on the road an' you're bound to

go, load 'er down with rocks. Plenty of 'em. I mean that wind 'll blow you clean to hell and gone if you don't."

Hines's brain was busy with a real, an acknowledged terror now, but something in the suggestion jerked at his mind.

"Right," he said suddenly. "Thanks. I'll do it. I believe it's needed."

The other man unfastened his car-door and stepped out.

"I'll help," he said amiably.

In silence they worked. The empty seat beside the driver was filled with boulders and smaller rocks. All the floor-space filled up. Hines flung up the back of the rumble seat and they filled it with stones of smaller size.

"One more tip," said the other man thoughtfully. "Some flat rocks alongside your hood 'll help."

They found two huge stones, loosened by the dynamite that had made the cut. They wedged them in between the mudguards and the hood. Hines held out his hand. There was a bill in it.

"Go to hell," said the other man cheerfully. "Me, I'm a socialist and a proletarian, an' judging by your car you're a damn' capitalist—a bourgeois anyways. But one guy can help out another one, can't he?"

Hines put away the bill and shook hands instead.

"My girl's up there in the mountains," he said briefly. "I'm going up to see if she's all right."

"Good luck!"

HINES'S car, with its top gone and its windshield laid flat before it, went into low gear with a vast groaning. It was burdened with over half a ton of stone. It went into second with a little difficulty. Then the

wind began to make itself felt. Despite its added weight, the car went into high gear quite normally. It was rolling along at twenty miles an hour when it came out of the cut into the full blast of the wind again.

Hines was flung against the side door. The car shuddered horribly. Gasping for breath, with his head bent over, his hat gone instantly, Hines fought to keep it on the road. There was a curve here, and for two hundred yards he went squarely across the wind. Without the rocks, no vehicle ever built would have stayed on the road in such a blast.

Then the road turned again and the wind was behind him once more. Instantly the car picked up speed. Thirty, thirty-five, forty miles an hour. Forty-five miles—fifty—

The landscape flashed past, a mass of wrecked trees and debris. Hines saw the body of a motor truck a full hundred yards from the road, smashed against a rocky hillside. He saw two, three, a dozen cars overturned—always on the side of the road to which the wind would have flung them. He came to a town which was nearly obliterated. Wreckage littered the streets. He jammed on the brakes, raced his motor, got it into second, and slowed by the braking action of the engine. He raced it again and got into first and turned off his switch.

He was going no more than fifteen miles an hour when the car careened over a heap of rubbish which once had been part of a building, swung about insanely and crashed where splintered planks had piled up against a massive stone wall.

It was part of a road tunnel underneath a railroad track.

Then Hines saw a man crawling on the pavement before him. The man

had a rope about his waist, which was evidently tied to something. A paint-pot slopped white paint about as he pushed it ahead of him. He was painting huge letters on the concrete roadway.

HINES STOP!

HINES STOP!

HINES STO

That was as far as he had gone. He was painfully working on the last letter of the third "Stop" when Hines opened the side door of his car. Hines slid out, gasping for breath, and dropped flat on his belly on the road. He went crawling about the splintered planks to windward until the man saw him. Then he shouted, uselessly, while the man stared.

IT was not until Hines had pointed repeatedly to his name and then to himself that comprehension slowly dawned on the crawling man's face. The fellow waved and shouted an order across the ten feet of intervening space, then hauled himself along the rope in the very teeth of the wind to a doorway in the side of the road-tunnel. Seconds later he was out again with another rope. He flung it into the air, and the wind stretched it taut.

Hines crawled, knotted it about his body, and felt himself hauled across the road.

For the second time he was in a blessed calm. He stood up, panting. The man who had been painting on the road made a peculiarly absurd salute. "You're Police Inspector Hines, sir?" he asked woodenly.

Hines nodded, still unable to speak. "Corporal Woodford of the State Police, sir," said the man who had pulled Hines across the road by a rope.

"All wires are down, sir, but every broadcasting station that hasn't been wrecked has been broadcasting orders to every possible agency to stop you from going into the storm.

"Professor Schaaf managed to get a message out by radio, sir, from a spot very near the storm-center. He says that the storm is caused by Preston's darkness-apparatus, and that you are the only man able to stop it. And the storm, sir, simply has to be stopped. Will you step inside and give your instructions?"

Hines blinked, and then the meaning of the message came to him. Rage filled him, consumingly. And then he went sick with helplessness. Because, of course, he could have no instructions to give for the stopping of a storm.

CHAPTER III.

DECLARING WAR.

UNDER ordinary circumstances, it is probable that the little room in which Hines found himself would have seemed extraordinarily cramped and crowded.

It was perhaps eight feet by ten, certainly no more, and it was inset in a railroad fill which here was pierced for a vehicular roadway. A door opened upon the curbstone, and from the narrow doorstep it was no more than ten feet to the painted white line which normally marked the center of the road.

On the farther side of the railroad embankment there was another concrete highway, which explained the presence of the room. Here was a dangerous crossroad, and this little cubby-hole was a shelter for the State policemen.

There was a tiny stove, and a bench along one side of the wall, and a cupboard and a table. There were nails, from which a slicker, a belt with a holster attached, and a patched motorcycle inner tube depended. On the table a tiny radio blared forth intermittent sounds from an even tinier loud-speaker.

"To all authorities in New York State," said a voice crisply. "All traffic must be stopped where the wind has now reached a velocity of forty miles an hour. The storm is expected to increase in intensity until four o'clock this afternoon. Wherever possible the population must be warned of this fact. The storm will lessen markedly at about sunset and may have ceased entirely by morning.

"It is imperative also that Inspector of Police Hines be reached and warned not to enter the storm area. Where practicable, signs should be painted on stone walls or the pavement. 'Hines Stop!' will be enough to cause Inspector Hines to stop and make inquiry. He will probably travel on one of the following roads—"

Hines turned to his companion, who was busily raking together a heap of wires from the drawer of the table and twisting them together into a single long strand.

"I'm getting a buzzer signal ready," said the State trooper woodenly, "to use the railroad rails overhead. The radio said half an hour ago that all State troopers were to use buzzer signals and railroad tracks where they couldn't report otherwise. Not many of us left, sir, and very few of us can report, anyhow. I didn't bother with that until I'd put up signs to stop you, sir."

The radio had finished a long list of highways. It began again, repeating

the previous message word for word, while wind roared overhead in a deep-toned bellow which did not seem to vary by the fraction of a semitone. It was rising slowly in pitch, as a matter of fact, but so slowly that Hines's ears could not follow the change.

"THIS is an emergency means of communication, sir," said the trooper, joining wires together with painstaking care. "It's the old buzzer line that used to be used in the Army. I take an induction coil, the one from my motorcycle, sir, and put the secondary into the rail up overhead. The rail's iron, sir, and it isn't insulated, and it's not very efficient, but they can pick it up with amplifiers at the other end."

He bent two wires and fastened them to the storage-battery which ran his radio. He was busy for a minute or more, improvising a make-and-break contact.

The trooper put it down, satisfied, and tied a rope about himself.

"We have ropes here, sir, for towing," he observed. "I'm going out with the wire, sir, and try to fasten this to the railroad rail. If I'm blown away, sir, will you try to haul me back?"

"Wait a bit," said Hines shortly. "I'm going to do that. I don't know Morse code; and you're needed for signaling. I'll make the connection. . . . It's my order," he added sharply as the trooper shook his head.

Reluctantly, the trooper gave him the rope-end.

Hines knotted the rope tightly about his body and stepped out of the door. Wind struck him, and took his breath away. But that was the wind that blew through the relatively sheltered traffic-way. He was crawling on his belly

when he came out on the lee side of the railroad fill, and a monstrous eddy of wind lifted him six inches off the ground and flung him crashing ten feet away. He gasped, and began to crawl desperately up the incline toward the rails.

The wind, here, had formed a monstrous whirl over the slight obstruction. The dried cinders, dust, and small stones which once had covered the side of the embankment had long since been sucked up and flung madly away. It was naked damp clay that smeared him as he crawled toward the tracks.

He seemed to be weightless, as the wind-whirl tried to lift him upward. Hines had been in the European war, and he thought that he had learned to hug the ground, but never before in his life had he clung so desperately to the earth as he did now. He was blinded, strangled.

There was a vast, malevolent force pulling and tugging at his body. And then quite suddenly his fingers scraped concrete, and he fought the wind that strove to push his exploring hand aside and found a steel signal-post that must be beside the track.

It was that post that really made it possible for him to reach the rails. The blast that came over the top of the embankment was as fierce, as savage, as nearly irresistible as a flood of swiftly-flowing water. Nobody knows what velocity the wind ultimately attained in the Storm, but it had reached a hundred and forty miles an hour when the self-registering anemometer in the Burton observatory was wrecked.

Hines faced that wind, and fought his way inch by inch by means of the steel bands connecting the signal-post to the rails. An outstretched arm caught the wind. The sleeve ballooned

out and burst. A flapping end was seized by the wind and the rest of the garment was literally peeled from him.

Here, of course, the wind was at its worst as far as Hines was concerned. He was protected by no more than the four-inch steel rail from its full force, and constantly there poured over him dust, smaller fragments of débris, and above all and over all the overpoweringly dense and solid wind itself.

When the connection was made, Hines was sobbing with sheer exhaustion. He slid back down the incline, an inch at a time. And then suddenly the wind caught him, and he felt himself lifted up. The rope about his body tightened and hurt intolerably, and then he felt a crash and lost consciousness.

WHEN he came back to himself he was lying on the floor in the little eight-by-ten room again, and the State trooper was working the buzzer signal steadily. He stopped, and came over to Hines.

Hines stirred, and the trooper nodded to himself. He went back to the buzzer and worked it again.

The radio broke off in the midst of its tediously repeated message.

"Corporal Woodford!" said the loud-speaker crisply. "Since Inspector Hines has recovered consciousness, we will give him the message from Professor Schaaf. He is in communication with the American Electric Company by means of a short-wave set, and we will rebroadcast it to you."

There were clickings. One or two curious crashing noises. Then a reinforcement of the roaring of the storm, only this extra roaring came from the speaker. It was evident that wherever Schaaf was speaking into a microphone, the storm was there too.

"Hello, Hines," said the placid voice of Schaaf. "This is a fery pleasant situation, I dondt think. Now I giff you der works, and you use your head. Here is what I haff found out.

"At six this morning der sun changed color. From where I am, I obserfe with a spectroscope that der infra-red part of der sun spectrum is completely gone cuckoo. I haff examined electric lights in der same manner, and der infra-red spectrum is missing there, also.

"Der air where I am no longer transmits radiant heat. Der air, in other words, is opaque to heat-waves, as our friendt Breston has been able to make it opaque to light. I think he is up to some more of his deffilment. As you remember, he was able to make der air absorb and neutralize light, producing his infernal darkness.

"I conclude that he has contrifed to make der air absorb heat instead of permitting it to come on down to der ground, and in consequence der air within range of his sending-apparatus is getting hot as der deffil because it is absorbing all der heat that should pass through it to warm the earth. Getting hot, it expands and rises. More cool air is rushing in underneath. That, in turn, is getting excited and rushing to der upper stratosphere.

"Der result is der Storm, that is raising hell. From der communications I haff received from der American Electric Company, der storm-center is fifty miles across, which makes it a hell of a storm. Der aferage for a typhoon is ten to fifteen miles.

"Der information I haff for you is that it is definitely Breston who is making this storm. He has a sending-apparatus with a range of twenty to thirty miles in efery direction. Where his *verdammt* short waves reach, der

air is no longer transparent to heat-waves and all der heat of der sun is being used to heat der atmosphere, instead of der earth. There is bractically a chimney fifty miles across, full of hot air which is rising toward heafen and raising hell.

"You can locate der sending-station with apparatus like we used to line up der source of der darkness, before. I will be in communication with der Electric Company for some time to come. You can reach me, of course. But be careful as der deffil how you talk. Breston is no doubt listening in.

"I don't know what you are going to do, or how you are going to do it, but you haff got to do something. Der chimney of hot air will stop working, of course, at sunset. But it will probably begin again at sunrise, and in der meantime there will be der deffil of a storm all night long because of der hell that was raised all day. Good luck, Hines. I sign off now."

THERE were more clickings and the storm-roar from the loud-speaker stopped. Then the crisp voice of the announcer came once more.

"Mr. Hines! I hope you received Professor Schaaf's message. Woodford's communications are coming through quite clearly. It is not yet known just where you are. If you will send word, every effort will be made to reach you. In the meantime, will you give what orders you can about preparations for stopping this storm?"

The trooper, with his improvised key poised, looked expectantly at Hines.

"My messages are getting through, sir," he said woodenly. "And I imagine that they can't be read by anybody except at the other end of the rails. Before you recovered consciousness, the commissioner of police in New York City broadcast a message giving you full authority. The State authorities have done the same. What shall I tell them you want done?"

Hines's hands were clenched tightly. Kathryn was up in the mountains somewhere, somewhere near the center of the storm which was Preston's work. Preston's work!

She was probably dead by this time. Few buildings could stand the blast that blew outside. There was nothing to do, now, but get Preston.

Preston was the one man on earth that Hines unfeignedly hated. He had seen the man once. He had fought him twice, with the scientist Schaaf's aid. Preston should have been one of the greatest scientific geniuses on earth, but instead had now made himself the most cold-blooded murderer in history.

Preston found that certain short Hertzian waves produced a state of fluorescence in the air* so that the visible waves of light were absorbed by the ions of the atmosphere, and an utter darkness was produced.

Once, some months before, he had sent a beam of those waves down Fifth Avenue, in New York. In fifteen minutes of utter blackness the forewarned underworld of the city reaped a harvest of which Preston received his share.

*The fluorescence of atmospheric air under the influence of certain wave-lengths of radiation was described as long ago as 1911 in a lecture before the Royal Institution of Great Britain by Professor R. W. Wood of Johns Hopkins University. The very short rays discovered by Schumann were demonstrated to produce fluorescence in air. The experiments and a photograph of the phenomenon may be found reprinted in the Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1911, which is available in many public libraries. See page 165 *et seq.*

With every resource of science and courage, Hines and Schaaf had fought him then, and had won. His apparatus for producing darkness was destroyed, and he seemed to have been killed. It was that success that had won Hines promotion to an inspectorship of police.

PRESTON, however, was not dead. Three months since, he had reappeared with a new and larger apparatus for the broadcasting of his short waves. He filled the whole city with the unbelievably high-frequency broadcast, and the air above the whole metropolitan district absorbed all visible rays and transformed them into invisible heat. The whole city was immersed in an ocean of oblivion.

Again Hines had fought him, with Schaaf's assistance. That bulky blond German scientist had invented instruments for locating the source of this radiation which had an almost catalytic effect in producing darkness. The effect of the waves was out of all proportion to the power used in producing them.

By Schaaf's instruments and Hines's courage, again the menace to the city had been nullified; but Preston had gone scot-free, and had become a millionaire through the panic in the stock-market his horrible weapon had caused.

He remained undiscovered and at large, and his captured apparatus had been destroyed by the explosion of an evidently prepared bomb before it could be examined.

Now he was again at work. He had prepared apparatus which could send over a circle from fifty to sixty miles across. Wherever that station maintained a field of force of the extremely short radio waves, there the effects of the unholy radiation were evident.

He seemed to be using now a slight-

ly different wave-length than had caused all light radiation to be absorbed by the air. Now it was that all heat was arrested by the atmosphere. The warmth of the sun did not reach the earth. The air itself became heated instead. Heated, it rose, and created a cyclonic storm beyond all parallel.

Preston, in the midst of that storm, was as safe from any danger save that of the storm as if he were protected by armies. No man could reach him, alive. He was invulnerable, protected by the sheer destruction he had invoked.

HINES clenched his hands in the cubby-hole dug in the railroad embankment. His eyes narrowed. Kathryn was very probably dead, and Preston still lived. Preston would have to be killed for the sake of humanity alone; yet Hines would kill him to avenge her only.

"First," said Hines in a cold and utterly bitter tone, "I want everybody who's sold stocks short for a week past to be checked up. Preston will be operating in terms of millions. I suggest that the stock-market be closed, because when it's closed he can have no motive to continue the storm. And then—"

He paused to marshal his thoughts, while rage pumped in every artery and an almost insane hatred maddened him.

"Then," he said harshly, "I want the biggest tanks in the United States Army to be sent up here as soon as the wind dies down a little. They'll have to travel under their own power, because the roads and railroads alike are useless. I want the big forty-ton ones. I want at least two gun-carrier tanks with six-inch guns and a supply of gas

and high explosive shell. And I want some bombs."

He went on to list cables, more bombs, and airplane photo maps of all the Catskills.

Meanwhile the Storm increased in force. It had been unbelievable before. Now the wind reached an intensity hitherto unknown upon the earth.

CHAPTER IV.

INTO THE DESOLATION.

WHEN sunset came and the Storm died down temporarily, it had left its marks all over a circle of territory a full thousand miles in diameter. The damage done ranged from a mere blowing-down of signs at the edge of that circle, to the absolutely unparalleled devastation of the territory immediately about the storm-center.

In the center, of course, the damage was terrific. Forests, houses, hamlets, towns, all were leveled to the ground. Yet, there were survivors. Cellars protected some, as did valleys and hollows. Probably four or five thousand people lived through it.

The fifty-mile circle of the storm-center was devastated, but it was not destroyed. And beyond the storm-center, where the wind had not reached its ultimate velocity, the amount of damage was neatly proportioned to the distance from the focus of the storm.

But about the edge of that central area—the space Schaaf had spoken of as the chimney—there was a ringlike strip of utter desolation, five to fifteen miles wide.

Every particle of vegetation had been swept away by the sheer force of the wind. The fields were bare even of grass. In spots apparently even the

topsoil had dried to dust and gone sweeping away into oblivion in the storm-wind. The forests were shattered areas of splintered stumps. The houses had left as traces only small mounds of masonry, or else no signs at all.

The storm died down at sunset and for half an hour there was almost peace. But the vast chimney of sun-heated air which shot upward for miles had acted as a vacuum, drawing to itself air from every direction with terrific speed. When the vacuum abruptly ceased to be, the winds continued to blow for a time from sheer momentum, and piled up a colossal high-pressure system which was as intolerable as the previous storm-center had been.

Over all the North Atlantic States, then, there was atmospheric chaos. Dense clouds formed at nightfall. Rain in unexampled volume fell, while electric storms wrought havoc. In the Catskill section mountain streams, choked with the debris of the wind's creation, became flooded with falling water and abruptly turned to inundations.

In that terrible strip of desolation about the storm-center itself, the bare, stripped earth turned to a vast morass of mud. And that morass claimed victims when survivors in the central area tried to cross it during the darkness and the rain.

AT nine o'clock, rain was falling in sheets, in columns, almost in solid masses. Lurid, unbelievable bolts of lightning leaped from one horizon to the other.

There were no electric lights, of course, in two thousand square miles of New York State that night. Beneath monstrous clouds which poured floods upon the earth, there was only

blackness, save at one spot. There, pencil-beams of light stabbed futilely at the falling rain, where twelve huge tanks rocked and lurched and slid on up toward the mountains.

They had stopped in their advance and picked up Hines. He sat up in the control-room of the largest of all of them, and asked dreary questions and dully gave instructions which organized the attack.

The tanks would go on up toward the site of the storm-center. They would gather, presently, and Hines would give instructions which would be final. Then they would scatter to their several strategic points.

With dawn, when the Storm That Had to be Stopped began again, they would use the instruments Schaaf had originally designed for determining the point of origin of certain other short waves. They would find Preston's station. It would probably be a dugout, underground, for safety from the storm he could create at will. The tanks would bomb that station mercilessly. Or if he had intrenched himself upon a mountain peak, the gun-carrying caterpillars would come into action. Six-inch guns would assail a solitary man who essayed to devastate the earth.

Only colossal things such as they were—weighing forty tons each—could hope to exist and move in the atmospheric turmoil that would begin with sunrise.

The tanks rumbled and lurched as they made their way in a sedate long line toward the hills. Rain poured in rivulets from their steel sides. Sheets and masses of falling water scattered the beams from the searchlights mounted upon them. From the control-room it was possible to see perhaps twenty feet with some clarity, and

dimly for thirty feet more. But after that even the searchlight glare was dissipated by the rain.

Hines looked weary and worn and haggard. All day long he had been in communication with New York, giving orders which men leaped to obey.

The State had given him full authority. He had shown his ability. Besides, the scale, the scope of this disaster was one to induce panic. The leadership of Hines, who had twice defeated Preston, would restore some confidence in a public otherwise more than inclined to be panic-stricken.

THESE were army tanks, shipped on flat-cars as far as the rails were undamaged, drawn by a locomotive that had crept on and on, as far as it dared, while the Storm still blew in the daytime. They had come at full speed immediately darkness fell.

Now they went lurching and pounding up toward the hills. The clanking of their mighty treads was thunderous in their reverberating interiors. The roaring of their motors was deafening.

They were full of the smell of hot oil and exhaust-gases and fuel, but up in the control-room the lightning and thunder blotted out all sights and sounds, and the sheer desert of mud over which they traveled toward the hills made it impossible for any man who saw it to think of anything else.

Hines, alone, thought of Kathryn. The awful desolation over which the tanks traveled had been covered with farms and houses and forests only twelve hours before. People had lived here—people who now were torn and draggled corpses flung haphazard amid the other débris of the Storm.

Hines had been cooped up for twelve hours knowing his helplessness, know-

ing that Kathryn was either dead or desperately in need of help. Now, he was sure, she was dead. The desert of mud over which the tanks passed was enough to convince him of her death.

The radio had told them that over most of the United States the wind had reached gale intensity.

The weather bureau in Washington was working like mad to predict the unpredictable, but from the one day's storm alone weeks of chaotic weather could be foreseen.

Already meteorologists were speculating upon the effect of the Storm upon the climate of Europe. California, it was certain, would be visited by subsidiary hurricanes, and from Texas on north there would be cyclonic whirls of terrible intensity as the air of the earth moved to fill up the vacuum Preston could create at will.

What news there was of the loss of life was so monstrous as to have lost all meaning. The record of towns destroyed, of villages wiped out, became monotonous. From the standpoint of property destroyed the Storm was one of the major catastrophes of history; and if the death toll was lighter than certain plagues and earthquakes, it was only because the larger cities were fortunately far from the circles of highest wind-velocity.

THE feel of slippery mud beneath the tanks' great treads changed subtly. The earth became curiously more solid. A great boulder appeared not far from the leading tank's track, glistening and running with rain. The tank changed course to avoid it. Hines looked back. Despite the falling water, he could detect a long lane of white glows, which were the searchlights of the following tanks.

The tanks still went on. They were in what seemed to be a semi-solid mass of water, intermittently made into a greenish universe of light by lightning-flashes which were blurred by the rain to mere indefinite illumination. In the periods of darkness between those flashes, the searchlights gleamed brightly ahead. And water poured from the tanks in floods.

Débris appeared, water-soaked and shredded. The stumps of wind-whipped, obliterated Indian corn began suddenly to the left. The treads of the tanks clanked suddenly on concrete. There was a road beneath the leading tank.

A speaking-tube whistled in the leading tank.

"Headquarters," came up thinly to the control-room, "orders you to try to locate yourself by road signs or any other evidences of position."

The officer in command of the tank snorted and made no answer.

The tank went on. There was concrete under the left tread only. The tank wallowed around and climbed back on the road. It went rumbling blindly on in the rain. Presently bare concrete was visible. Mud had not washed across it here.

"There!" said Hines sharply. "A road-sign bent over by the wind! It's in place!"

An unearthly hooting set up. The tank stopped with a grinding noise. Hines peered out of the little vision-slits and saw a dripping man with a flash light bent over something by the side of the road. It was one of the cast-iron road signs one finds in the Catskills. They are set up on wrought-iron posts, which are fixed in concrete.

Originally the sturdiness of construction was made necessary by the vandal habits of a motoring populace,

but it served a useful purpose now. Set facing the wind, the cast-iron plate had caught the full blast. And the wrought-iron shaft had bent slowly but definitely until the sign lay nearly flat, facing upward.

The dripping soldier came sprinting back into the tank. The speaking-tube whistled again.

"The sign says 'North Weddensdale Corporate Limits,' sir."

Hines clenched his hands. This was the village where Kathryn had been staying! He strained his eyes desperately through the rain.

A rectangular hole to the left of the concrete caught his eye. It was a cellar. The house had been taken cleanly away from above it. Nothing was left. Nothing.

"Go on," he said hoarsely.

The tank ground into motion again. Rain poured from its sides. Its searchlight ray stabbed into the darkness and was dissipated by falling water.

Then the searchlight ray went out.

ALMOST instantly thereafter the speaking-tube whistled.

"All the tanks, sir, report their searchlights have gone out."

The officer commanding the leading tank swore to himself. "All right. Everybody stop and repair them."

Hines heard his voice speaking hoarsely:

"It's the Darkness. The metal walls of the tank act as shields, so we can see inside, but it's the Darkness—the same darkness Preston turned on in New York. If you send a man outside to make sure, keep up a noise so he can find his way back."

Hines went, himself, to the exit door of the tank. He heard two men moving about outside. The interior of the tank was brightly lighted, and the door

was opened wide, but the light from inside did not strike upon the earth beneath the tank. It seemed to be absorbed by some solid black substance which surrounded the metal monster and stretched solidly almost with an inward bulge, across the open door.

Thunder shook the earth. There was a crashing and crackling of electricity. From the violence of the report, the lightning-flash must have struck somewhere near by. But there was no faintest flickering of light.

Then, in a peculiarly ghastly fashion, a groping hand came out of the solid wall of blackness across the tank's exit door. It seemed disembodied, detached from any body. It caught at the edge of the door. A man came; wild-eyed and staring, out of the apparently solid opacity. His teeth chattered as he swung into the illuminated tank.

"The—the flash light don't work," he gasped. "I held it up to my eyes and it just glowed, but it don't give any light. See?"

He pressed the button. A brilliant gleam shot from the flash light. His jaw dropped open. But Hines nodded his head very bitterly.

The Storm had been made by the broadcasting of very short Hertzian waves which caused the atmosphere to be opaque to heat; a mere variation of a device that Preston had used before. Now he had gone back to the use of his first device again.

Now, from somewhere within a thirty-mile radius, he was broadcasting short waves differing perhaps by the fraction of a millimeter in length from those that had produced the Storm. And these tiny ripples in the ether caused the absorption of all that band of frequencies which made visible light.

There was darkness outside the tanks so dense as to be tangible, so complete as to constitute utter blindness, so thick that it caused the perfect absorption of even the ten thousand candle-power searchlight beams within a distance of three feet.

HINES thought grimly, staring at the apparently solid wall of darkness without the door. The metal walls of the tanks, of course, absorbed and grounded the waves that impinged upon them. The darkness could not invade the tanks themselves. But it blinded the drivers beyond the possibility of a remedy.

The engines of the tank stopped suddenly. The officer in command swung down from the control-room, his lips twisted wryly.

"I reported to headquarters," he said briefly, "and received orders to stop my motors and wait for dawn. It is believed that the darkness will be lifted when the Storm is started up again."

Hines did not hear him. He was listening with his ears strained to their utmost. In the near-silence that came with the engine's stopping, the sound of the rain and thunder outside seemed to redouble. The rain was invisible, the lightning unseen, but there was a tumult without the tank that was terrifying. Yet in the midst of that tumult Hines thought he heard a faint cry.

It was repeated. Again, and again. And cold sweat came out upon Hines. He could not believe his ears, yet he dared not disbelieve them. Out there in a storm such as would have been called a tornado if the Storm itself had not given a new meaning to the word, he heard a voice which he could swear was that of Kathryn!

The storm itself was violent enough to make venturing into it madness—and he would have to go into it as a blind man.

The cry came once more. It was fainter, this time.

CHAPTER V.

TRICKED.

TWO members of the crew of the tank volunteered to go with him.

They went out as Alpine climbers travel, tied together with a long strand of wire that paid out behind them. It would insure that they returned to the tank, or would lead them to any of their number who was injured.

Hines went first, groping over unfamiliar ground, unable to guess where his next step would bring him. He had broken out the glass of a pocket compass proffered by one of the tank's company and steered by the feel of its needle, with the tank hooting dismally behind him at regular intervals for his better orientation.

He went on into the blackness which seemed almost familiar. His flash light bulb glowed dimly when three inches from his eyes. Farther away, its light was absorbed by the opaque air, and he seemed to swim through it as a diver might swim through a sea of ink.

A fall into a ditch crammed with debris corrected the sensation of swimming, however, and he blundered on and gashed his leg against the splintered stump of a tree whose knife-edged fragments were in nowise softened by the rain.

Rain pelted downward through the darkness. It poured from him in streams. He had to bend almost dou-

ble to protect his open compass from the falling water while he felt of the needle.

The tank hooted behind him. He went on. The wire attached to his waist dragged. It jerked, and he halted to allow the following man to move forward and give him slack. He shouted, and the beginning of his shout was loud, and the end of it was drowned out by thunder. He listened, and heard only the terrible drumming of miles of rain.

Then a cry in answer. He shouted again, and plunged forward and stumbled ten feet on and gashed his forehead horribly, and went on again with warm blood mingling with the rain that beat down on his face. Suddenly he was sprawling on hands and knees on a monstrous heap of broken bricks and field-stone.

A cry came up almost below him. He cursed the darkness then, and called once more; and Kathryn sobbed.

"I—I'm all right, only some brick-work fell on me and I can't get up," she said unsteadily a moment later.

"I'm coming down to you," said Hines hoarsely.

"Be careful! There's an open space just above me, where the floor broke in, but there's loose rock there. You may fall."

Hines gritted his teeth and fumbled here and there with infinite caution. Loose rock above a hole over Kathryn's head meant not so much danger to him as to her.

He tore his hands on splintered planks. A figure came blundering near by. He heard it gasping, but he saw nothing, anywhere.

"Easy!" snapped Hines. "We're here! Stand still!"

Kathryn said steadily from below:

"You're nearly above me. I think

you're at the edge of the hole in the flooring."

He found it, and called quietly to the other man.

"Our belts," he said briefly. "We'll put 'em together and you lower me. Then you can haul her up, and after her, me."

He went down, dangling in the blackness with no more knowledge of his whereabouts than a blind man would have had. He landed in a foot and a half of water.

"Here," said Kathryn unsteadily. "B-but be careful of the m-masonry."

HE stumbled against her shoulder before he realized that she was trapped near the floor. The cellar was filling with the drainage of the rain. Hines was two men then, for an instant. One felt coolly until he had located the mass of brick and mortar that pinned her down, and had envisioned its position and its size. The other man was sick with horror at the thought of the death that had awaited her as the cellar slowly filled with water.

He had more than two men's strength as he wrenched at the mass of stone, though. It fell with a turgid splashing that was louder than the drumming of the rain and the constant splashing of water that came down into the stone-lined depression.

He lifted her and held her close, there in the unbelievable blackness. He sent her up, by the linked belts. And he carried her himself, the long, stumbling, rather terrible way back to the hooting tank, which slowly hauled in the wire as he advanced. The other men blundered on ahead of him to take any falls there might be while he carried Kathryn.

Her arm was broken, and she was

badly bruised, but that was all. Hines set the arm himself, while she smiled at him gamely in the smelly, machinery-crowded war-engine.

Then Hines turned to the commander of the tank with a new and more savage grimness. He had gained a new motive from Kathryn's injury. Oddly enough, he had felt defeated in advance while he believed her dead, but a new and throbbing rage swept over him because of her injury, a fiercer passion than the hopeless hatred her death would have caused.

"Look here," he said savagely. "You've had orders to take directions from me. Preston's turned on the dark, outside. He thinks we're helpless. You radio headquarters and tell them I order you to go on. I take all responsibility."

The officer grinned.

The ordnance department maps of the Catskills leave some things to be desired, to be sure. There are errors, in spots, and they are not wholly up to date. But every road and bridle-path and every grade and hollow is shown upon them.

With a concrete road under their treads and the North Weddensdale corporate limits sign for a position-sign, the tanks could very nearly go to any spot in all the mountains, blinded though they were.

Men had walked about each of the tanks, with flash lights held close to their eyes. They discovered that for a short distance beyond the tank, in the direction away from the sending-station of the waves of darkness, there was a lee, a "shadow"—a relatively small and cone-shaped shielded area, in which the air was protected from the Hertizian waves that made it opaque to light. In those shielded areas lights could be seen. And those small

spaces of transparent air gave a bearing—rough, to be sure, but still a bearing—on the station that was sending the short waves.

THE darkness was being transmitted from a spot nearly north-northeast of the steel monsters.

A man swung up in top of each one with a flash light and a hammer. He worked himself around the central turret until he had the turret between himself and Preston's transmitter of darkness. His flash light gave him proof of his direction. He rapped on the turret-plates. One rap for each division of the compass to the east of north, and two for each division to the left, was the agreed signal. He would transmit the bearing of the source of darkness whenever the turret was pounded on from within.

"One more thing," said Hines crisply. "Arrange with the other tanks to navigate by whistle-signals instead of radio. Preston will be listening in, you can be sure."

Then through the sound of thunder and of rain, there came the multitudinous hoots of many whistles. There was a whirring and the roaring of engines. Then with a monstrous grinding, the tank set off.

Hines and the tank officer bent over the map of this locality. Kathryn looked on, though her eyes rested most often upon the haggard, dragged figure that was Hines.

"The road curves here," said Hines quietly. "That will place us definitely."

The officer laid his finger on a certain spot.

"A bridge," he observed, "all of sixty feet high in the middle. We'll be crossing it—blind. And it may be blown out."

Hines shrugged. The tank rumbled on, and on. . . . Its whistle hooted, and was answered from behind. Then a long line of blind monsters hooted one after the other as they swam through obscurity as black as the blackest ink.

Concrete under the treads. They were steering the monster by compass, now, and the sound of the treads.

Quite suddenly, the tank wallowed off the concrete. It lurched, careened, swung about and then found the way again.

"That's the curve," said the officer. "We're located all right."

From this time on the navigation of the monster vehicle was confident and crisp. A modern tank records its course and distance so accurately that even in the densest fog it can retrace its way for miles without a landmark.

From the map a forecast of the course to be followed was being made and the tank lumbered on through oblivion. Utter darkness filled the world without its steel walls, save where one man sat in a terrific downpour in a triangular small space of transparent air, and watched a dripping compass by the light of a flash light.

From time to time he pounded savagely on the steel deck with a hammer, signaling to those within. From time to time, too, there were vast hooting noises, feet only from his head, and there were other dismal hootings behind him in the utter blackness.

THE feel of the concrete underneath changed subtly. The forty-ton weight of the tank was making the huge bridge sway slightly. The tank's whistle howled, in a succession of long and short blasts.

"They'll wait until we're across the bridge," said the officer shortly. "One at a time is load enough."

The leading tank ground on. The bridge quivered and shook. Presently the earth was solid under it again. It halted and seemed to bellow into the surrounding bedlam of rain and wind and thunder. An answering hoot came faintly. There was stillness, and presently the earth-quivering that told of the near approach of another monster. More hootings of whistles. Another great tank, and another.

The fifth tank was on its way across the narrow causeway which the map said spanned a ravine some sixty feet above the mountain stream. Suddenly, there was a wild screaming of its whistle, a terrific crash, and then a deafening detonation. The waiting tanks trembled from the concussion that ensued.

"It fell off the bridge," said the officer of the tank in which Hines rode. He spoke very calmly. "I suppose the rest of us weakened the bridge in passing over it. Maybe the Storm helped, too. It gave way and the bombs went off when the tank crashed."

He looked at Hines.

"We'll go on with those that are here with us," said Hines grimly. "Signal the rest to hunt for shelter from to-morrow's wind."

The hooting, dismal cavalcade of four tanks began again to fumble its way along the narrow ribbon of concrete that wound among the mountains. Twice the treads crunched shrieking metal beneath them. Cars, wrecked and, it was to be hoped, abandoned. Half a dozen times, in one relatively sheltered valley, the leading tank crushed a way through splintered masses of limbs and foliage that were heaped up in monster windrifts.

The half-drowned men out in the flood of rain pounded regularly their signals of the source of the waves of

darkness. The tanks had gone five miles in all in a little over an hour, when the poundings on the outside became frantic. A new signal of direction came through. Hines said shortly:

"Stop the whole line. Check with all of them."

The tanks had been boring their way through the blackness by map. The darkness-producing ether waves demonstrably had been coming from the north-northeast. Now, abruptly, they were proved to be coming from a little south of west.

Hines studied the map and the line that had been drawn to indicate the tank's ultimate destination. The sending-station was no longer there. It had changed position.

"Either," said Hines harshly, "Preston's moved his sending apparatus, or he has two or more of them. He turns one off and another one on. We haven't a burglar's chance of locating them if they turn off as we draw near them."

They were playing a deadly game of blind-man's-buff with Preston. Now Preston showed an unexpected resource. He had more than one outfit for producing darkness. When the tanks drew near one, that ceased to operate and another took up its task.

It seemed as if Preston had Hines beaten.

CHAPTER VI.

SCIENTIST AT BAY.

HEAVILY, laboriously, clumsily, the tanks crawled on through the darkness. They were blind and they were fumbling. They went clanking through a blackness as of the Abyss, with the peculiar confidence of things that have long been sightless,

while rain beat upon them and thunder roared about them.

Hines and the tank officer were again bent over the map.

"Schaaf's experiment station was here," said Hines shortly, touching a spot on the engraved sheet. "It was more or less a secret, but he was trying to work out how to make these same darkness-producing waves. He was trying, in fact, to duplicate Preston's results in hopes of finding some way to neutralize them. That accounts for his short-wave set and the experimental license that enabled him to use it."

The tank officer received a cross-bearing from the tanks they had left behind at the wrecked bridge, and drew a line on his map.

"This is the third darkness-transmitter Preston's brought into use," he said quietly.

"And he's using underground aërials," said Hines shortly, "because anything above ground would have been blown away by the Storm. We can't locate the transmitters closer than within a quarter of a mile, by cross-bearings, and we can't count on destroying them even with explosives unless we locate them more closely than that. Poison-gas will be useless in the wind that will be blowing by dawn."

"We're licked, then," said the tank officer.

"Not yet," said Hines grimly. "We've got the bearings now. Let's go on. I've still got one hope. Schaaf's a smart man."

The tanks crawled on blindly, like gigantic eyeless slugs creeping along the bottom of the ocean's deepest deep, while within a vast irregular circle fifty miles across, the drenched, shivering, hysterical survivors of the Storm itself

went closer to madness from the terror of the dark.

AT one o'clock in the morning, while all over the United States people sat up by their radios and listened fascinatedly to the never-ceasing broadcasts of news and orders, reports and fragmentary pleas for help, there was the first direct word from the man who had caused the Storm That Had to be Stopped.

Radio broadcasting was, of course, the next most important factor, after Hines's activities in lessening the damage Preston did to the earth.

All the first night of the storm a warning was broadcast to the isolated folk who hastily turned to the radio as their sole link with the outside, that the wind was to be expected to begin again at daybreak. By broadcasting the location of the few hamlets protected by fortuitously placed mountains, much good was done.

Mostly, though, the radio served to make all the world realize the extent of the catastrophe. It is to the credit of the people of America that trains loaded down with supplies for the devastated area were already on their way while the Storm still raged on its second day.

The radio enabled all the continent to share in the horror of the Storm, and also the radio was the means of communication with Hines and the blinded tanks in the storm-center, so that a hundred million people shared in his adventure, in his attempt to stop the Storm.

Perhaps the most spectacular feat the radio performed that night was an accident. It was at one o'clock. The tank officer in charge of Hines's tank was communicating with headquarters. The Red Cross had arranged for

half a dozen sentences from him, describing the devastation the tank had passed through on its way to the mountains. If rehabilitation was to take place, vast sums would be needed, and money could best be got while the catastrophe was fresh in peoples' minds.

The tank officer spoke curtly into the microphone to headquarters. His words were amplified and rebroadcast and sent over the nation-wide chains of radio stations. A hundred million people heard his voice and even the noise of the machinery of the tank, crawling through the darkness where the Storm was made.

But he had spoken no more than a dozen words when another voice cut in. This other voice was harsh, metallic; an abominably cocksure and arbitrary voice. It spoke with a studied insolence.

"THIS is Preston speaking," said the voice arrogantly, and instantly folk all over the United States stiffened in their chairs as the unexpected tones came from their loudspeakers.

"I have been much amused by the accounts of the efforts made to find and kill me. I have been listening in, of course, from my entirely secure retreat in the storm-center, and I am speaking on the same wave-length the tanks have been using. I hear my own voice in another speaker, being rebroadcast as the lieutenant's voice was supposed to be. I think it about time that the people of the United States should know with whom and what they deal."

Preston's voice stopped, and millions of people waited breathlessly. Static interrupted his words, and whole phrases were sometimes obliterated.

ated by the crashings made by the lightning, but on the whole his message was clear.

"I have made this storm for my own private purposes. I can continue it for days, for weeks, even for months. In one week, I am informed, I will have so deranged the normal atmospheric conditions in the United States that the crops of this fall will be practically ruined.

"In two weeks, by drawing down the colder air from the Arctic Circle, I will have brought on winter in Canada. In three weeks there will be four feet of snow in London, Germany will be frozen in, and all the north of France will have a semi-arctic climate, while the United States will face a famine. I invite the meteorological experts of the world to verify my statement.

"I shall continue the storm I have created until the governments I have mentioned make it worth my while to stop it. In the meantime, I assure you that the tanks that are trying to locate me have no chance of success. The Storm will continue until I wish it to stop. I will stop it only when I am sufficiently paid for my trouble."

The arrogant voice ceased. Announcers' voices, quivering with excitement, followed with a statement that radio compasses had picked up the message before its cessation and that it had actually come from the Catskills, from the storm-center.

The United States began to be afraid. The Boards of Governors of the Stock Exchanges of New York and Chicago began to arrange, quietly, for the closing of those exchanges. Cables began to carry long messages in diplomatic code across the ocean-beds.

Suddenly another broadcast, as widely distributed as the first, came

from Schaaf, in his tiny laboratory set in a hillside. He had a national reputation, now, as an associate of Hines, and he was frantically called upon for a statement to nullify the panic that Preston's announcement would cause.

Schaaf's speech, repeated in the same ten million receiving sets, was entirely characteristic of him.

"I haff heard Breston's speech," he said dryly. "I remark that my friendt Hines is on the way to join me in a little *Schrecklichkeit* party, to be bractised on Breston. I consider that as im-bortant as anything Breston has said. We will haff him in a matter of hours. As for his threats to mess up der weather of two continents, I say one thing: No matter how thin you slice it, it is still boloney."

SCHAAF'S speech had just the tone necessary to restore confidence without lessening the public's sense of the real urgency of the situation. There were speculators in food-stuffs and other necessities, of course, who immediately grasped the opportunity Preston's threats created. They, by the way, suffered considerable losses by their enterprise as things turned out.

But on the whole the public reacted in highly favorable fashion to Schaaf's dry reassurance. Americans will always pay more for a good joke than a pathetic story, and Schaaf raised more money by the last line of his speech than all the tear-jerking efforts of radio spellbinders during the rest of the night.

Schaaf did not listen in and hear himself eulogized on the ether-waves, the details of his scientific career sandwiched in between casualty lists and weather predictions. He was placidly unaware of his sudden celebrity.

In fact, until the restored mail-services brought him sacks of admiring and begging letters, and an astounding number of proposals of marriage from female admirers, he was not aware that he had done anything out of the ordinary.

He was busy. He turned from the microphone with a grunt of disgusted relief. His experiment-station was a tiny stone-walled building half sunk in a mountainside. It consisted of four rooms.

The laboratory alone was of use to him now. Experimenting as he had been with short radio waves, he had needed a workshop in which the only etheric disturbances would be those he made himself. The walls of the workshop were lined with copper sheeting and the windows covered with heavy copper gauze, all of which was grounded. The interior was insulated from all Hertzian waves from without.

Now that laboratory glowed brightly with electric light, though he had only to open a door to see the apparently solid mass of no longer transparent air which resulted from Preston's devices.

He took down a screen from a window. Instantly the blackness seemed to pour, to stab, into the brightly lighted laboratory. Through the opening in the grounded shielding, Preston's short-waves penetrated, depriving the air of its ability to permit light to pass through it. A long cone of darkness, so definite as to seem a solid substance, projected into the room—more powerful than the shielding because of the nearness to Preston's headquarters.

Schaaf grumbled and measured it, carefully making his measurements from accurately marked points. He wrote down his figures and replaced the screen. The seemingly tangible cone

vanished with much the effect of magic.

Schaaf sat down at a little table and began to calculate absorbedly. He scowled as he worked, and mumbled irritatedly as he took down a book of logarithms and ran his fingers down its columns.

THE table trembled, from time to time, with the violence of the thunder without. There was a very slow leak in the roof over in one corner, and now and again a drop fell glittering to an enlarging puddle on the floor. The wind howled outside. The rain drummed on the roof.

Schaaf finished his calculations, leaned back and absently combed out his luxuriant yellow whiskers with his fingers, then filled and lighted his pipe. Its poisonously strong odor filled the air.

The thunder was deafening and nearly continuous. The shrieking of the wind was daunting. The drumming sound of the rain was unspeakably depressing. Schaaf smoked comfortably for a space, and picked up the remnant of a half-eaten sandwich. He bit into it, stopped, and listened keenly.

There was a thin and dismal hooting above even the tumult from the skies. Schaaf beamed, and then growled impatiently. He swathed himself in oil-skins, muttering something about "*Der verdammt Breston!*" and took a huge reel of cord from the wall. It looked like the extra-strong braided cord that is used for scientific kite-flying—or for getting a kite aloft that is to carry up a temporary aerial. He fastened the end inside the door, knotting and double-knotting it. He went out, unreeling the cord behind him, and fought the door shut again.

There was no longer any movement

or any activity in the laboratory. A loudspeaker made nasal noises in one corner, which the booming of thunder and of wind and rain drowned out to inarticulateness. The lights burned steadily.

An open fire alternately leaped madly upward and died down to nothing beneath an improvised damper closing off most of the chimney-space above it. Rain made rattling noises on the windows, and wind screamed overhead, and always, always, always, the thunder boomed and crashed.

Then the door burst open and Schaaf came in again, fumbling his way back along the cord. He was soaked. Behind him, guiding themselves by the cord, came three other people. Hines was one of them, tattered and ragged and with a great gash on his forehead. He carried Kathryn lightly, in spite of the storm. She was wrapped in an oil-skin, one arm in improvised splints.

Hines set her down carefully and blinked with the air of a man whose sight has suddenly been restored. The third person was the officer in command of the leading tank.

Schaaf put his whole weight against the door and closed it.

"It was not bad work," he observed comfortably. "You stopped on der concrete road where der big tree had blown down, as I told you by radio. I came down, blundered into you, and banged on der door. Here we are. Now, where is der map?"

The tank-officer produced a sheet he had carried under his slicker. Schaaf began to unroll it.

"I haff sworn—*Gott!* How I haff sworn!—because I didt not haff a map of der locality. Miss Bush, go ofer by der fire and get warm. Now, Hines, show me my bresent location and tell me der scale of der map."

The tank-officer, instead, obeyed both orders. Hines was settling Kathryn comfortably by the fire. And Schaaf took dividers and a pencil and calculated feverishly, grumbling in guttural German at the absurdity of calculating distances in feet and inches instead of meters. Eventually he measured with painstaking accuracy, drew six lines from the location of his laboratory to very precise and exact lengths, and put large dots at their ends.

"THERE," he said decisively.

"That is der best I can do. I have watched der *verdammt* darkness. Look!" He pulled out a window-screen and a black cone of opacity stabbed across the brightly lighted room. He replaced the screen and it vanished. "Der wafes that destroy der transparency of der air," he said briskly, "can come in der window-opening when I remove part of der copper insulation inside. They interfere with each other, dissipate, and generally lose der original effectifness. Which gifes me my information. By der shape of der cone of blackness, I haff calculated der direction and distance of six different points from which Breston has transmitted darkness. At these six spots he has sending-stations."

The tank-officer said warmly:

"Splendid, sir! We took bearings as we came along—see my pencil-lines, sir?—and they intersect your lines at just the spots you indicate! It looks as if you are correct."

"Of course I'm correct! And if I had had der intelligence of an angle-worm I would haff made der same measurements of der wafes that made der storm and we would know where Breston is. He is not at all of those places, certainly."

"No," said Hines. "But what I'm hoping for, Schaaf, is some way to see in spite of the darkness. Once—"

"*Gott in Himmel!*" cried Schaaf angrily. "Haff I not kicked myself forty-sefen times? Before, when we fought Breston in New York, his wafes made der air opaque to fisible light, but not to ultra-fiolet, and we did tricks with that to find our way about. But now, he has juggled his wafe-lengths to make der air absorb der ultra-fiolet rays also. I am as blind as a bat at der bottom of der sea, Hines, and I am mad! I am mad as der deffil, Hines!"

Hines frowned at the map.

"He'll keep the darkness on, even after daybreak," he said coldly. "He'll shoot the storm-producing waves out as an addition. And since he turns off his sending-stations when a tank draws near—"

"Maybe he has microphones in der ground," said Schaaf gloomily. "Der sound of a tank is unmistakable. Or maybe he switches them on and off for der mere purpose of being confusing. In an efent I haff done all I can. I tell you abbroximately where his sending-stations are. But you cannot find them without seeing them or tracing der wafes home, and he turns them off when a tank comes near. It is like trying to catch a mouse that is in six holes at once."

Hines smiled faintly.

"But we have lots of cats," he observed. "Lieutenant, I want these orders given."

Schaaf listened critically, then appreciatively, and then he beamed as Hines's voice went on.

"Hines," he said comfortably, "if your brains were dynamite and they went off, der report would be like Vesuvius. We got der son-of-a-gun!"

Even the tank-officer grinned confi-

dently as he prepared to make his way back to the tank by the guiding cord.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HEART OF THE STORM.

RAIN drummed on the roof and clattered on the windows. Wind shrieked outside the little stone building. A mountain-flank had protected it from the blast of air that had blown all the day before, and the storm that raged during the night was merely a gale such as uproots trees and sinks ships at sea. But it was uncomfortable to listen to, with thunder making the tumult of a bombardment.

The smoke of Schaaf's pipe floated about the room. The loud-speaker had been turned off, Hines turned it on with an air of impatience.

"The lieutenant's been gone a long time. Do you suppose he was blown away?"

Schaaf grunted.

"Of course not, Hines. He is a smart young man. He got to his tank, and he has been gifting orders by radio to der other tanks that were left behind when der bridge gafe way. Breston will see that there is a cat at efery mouse-hole, in a little while."

"Preston probably has more than the six you marked down," said Hines shortly, "but we have eleven tanks."

He was worried, though. Abominably worried. All but four of the tank-force had been left behind early in the night, when one tank was destroyed as a bridge gave way under it. Those land-warships had now been ordered, separately, to make wide detours and somehow get to the six spots Schaaf had indicated.

They would approach the stations from which Preston was transmitting

his darkness-waves. If the station did not cease to transmit, the tank could ride it down and crush it, or bomb it with heavy bombs and destroy it utterly.

Preston had undoubtedly planned to alternate in the use of his transmitters for the precise purpose of preventing their location. But if every station he had ready to transmit had a tank waiting to pounce upon it—It was exactly like the posting of a cat at every mouse-hole. If the mouse showed his head—if a known station emitted the waves that produced the opacity of the air—the tank would pounce. But Hines was worried. Preston was clever.

"I am thinking, Hines," said Schaaf placidly, "that it should be near sunrise. I go and look."

For the third time he unfastened and opened a screen. For the third time a seemingly solid mass of blackness stabbed into the room. Schaaf disappeared into the tangible darkness. The noises of the outer air were suddenly magnified as he opened a window.

And the outer noises were changing markedly. Rain still fell and thunder still boomed. But the rain diminished. The drops became fewer and less regular. Then the thunder dwindled.

The listeners in the laboratory realized that a steady, even wind was blowing. It was a strong wind when they first noticed it. It gave forth a low hum whose pitch rose in minutes. It became a scream, and then a whistle that grew more and more shrill until human ears could not detect it. And then a steady, regular roaring noise took its place. It was the wind of the Storm That Had to be Stopped. On the second day of the Storm it rose much more rapidly than on the first.

Hines and Kathryn looked at each

other. Kathryn was pale, but she smiled at Hines.

"We've got to get out to the tank!" he said harshly.

Schaaf popped magically out of the blackness.

"Of all der double-barreled imbeciles!" he said bitterly. "We haff to reach der tank, and it is impossible! Der wind already is as strong as it was at its worst yesterday. Nobody could liff in it a second! Der laboratory nearly went yesterday! It will not stand another half hour if der wind increases!"

THE wind did increase. Shielded though the laboratory was by a mountain-flank, and thick stone as its walls were, the beams that upheld the roof began to creak. The walls quivered. Plaster fell from the ceiling. Windows burst outward, suddenly, and all light and movable things leaped toward them and vanished. Hines seized Kathryn and bore her to the mountainward side of the laboratory.

"We haff," said Schaaf calmly, "maybe fife minutes. Maybe less. I am sorry as der deffil, Hines, that we did not get that *verdammt* Breston."

Then there was a vibration which seemed to shake the very flooring. And suddenly a wall reeled and caved in, and a section of roof tore out. Then, quite incredibly, the monstrous beak of a tank thrust its way delicately into the laboratory and stopped. A door slid aside and the tank-officer stood beckoning in the opening.

"I figured it was the only thing to do," he shouted above the wind-roar as they struggled inside the tank. "The wind's unbelievable outside, and if you were kept from blowing away, you'd strangle."

"As der poet says," observed Schaaf calmly, "you said a library-full. What do we do now?"

"I've been getting reports from the other tanks," said the officer cheerfully. "Three of them have reached position. They know they're within a quarter of a mile of a darkness-transmitter, but each time it has turned off. The others are going on. We'll carry out the rest of the plan. All ready?"

The tank lurched backward. The laboratory collapsed, and instantly there was a savage bombardment by the wind. Beams, sections of roofs, stones, articles of furniture—everything the wind could wrench from the shattered building it flung with maniacal fury upon the tank.

The metal monster shuddered and clanged and reeled, and then turned about and slid on downhill with a ponderous clanking of its mighty treads. But the noise of the wind sounded even above the internal roaring of the tank's machinery.

There were hootings, unbelievably faint, and the tank-officer shook his head. He spoke curtly into a speaking-tube, and turned apologetically to Hines.

"Sound-signals are useless, sir. We are having to use radio again. We'll have quite a time of it anyhow. Better find seats of some sort. Or you can come up in the control-room."

The control-room was a tiny cubby-hole. There was room for the man who steered the cumbersome war-engine, and normally there was bare space for the commander of the tank. Now Hines squeezed in between them for the second time, and there was only the light of the dimly-lit instrument-board and a curious fuzzy appearance about the vision-slits where the dark-

ness came a little way into the tank's metal interior.

"Six of the tanks are going to their posts. The other four are following us," said the officer in Hines's ear. "We're going to try to keep hundred-yard intervals, but we're all blind."

And the tank went crawling on.

THE instruments gave their varying indications. The wind roared without. In the dead blackness the air had assumed not only the appearance but the solidity of a substance. It pressed upon the forty-ton tank with such force that even the monstrous engine was edged steadily to one side.

The line of tanks, crawling through blackness, was following a concrete road by map and the feel of the treads.

There was no one in the tanks who did not think in shuddering horror of what the blinded monsters might be doing as they lurched and swayed across a place that had been inhabited. There might be people yet living who would be crushed beneath the tanks' broad treads.

But they went on. Their destination was a spot which Hines had chosen. The located transmitters of darkness formed an irregular circle, and Hines guessed that the form was not an accident. And if it were intentional, and if the transmitters were governed by remote control, then sheer efficiency would dictate that the controlling spot should be in the center of the circle. If anywhere, Preston would be at a spot nearly equidistant from all his transmitters.

Hines watched the vision-slits of the control-room. They were narrow slits in a bullet-proof steel wall. Wind came in them so fiercely that it stung exploring fingers. And the darkness crept in.

The walls near the vision-slits looked fuzzy on the side nearest the darkness-transmitter then in action. A man outside could have taken the station-bearing accurately, while this method was rough at best; and no man could live outside now.

Hines craned his neck suddenly to look behind. The blurry little bands of darkness had vanished before him. Now they reappeared at the back of the control-room.

Hines clucked at the tank-officer's arm.

"A transmitter, behind us!" he barked in the officer's ear. "Have that last tank turn back and try to smash it!"

A snapped order went down the speaking-tube. The trailing tank turned about. Its steersman had but little to do save keep a certain disgusting fuzzy appearance at vision-slits exactly before him. The tank went blundering into heaps of still-standing masonry where the town had been. It surmounted or destroyed them. It careened and teetered upon the edge of a cellar, plunged boldly into it, crashed blindly to the other side and reared upward clumsily to crawl out.

The officer in command of the trailing tank saw that the fuzziness had vanished from the control-slits ahead. It had reappeared behind. As near as this, even the roughest of observations would serve. He yelled an order down below. A monstrous, misshapen egg went rolling down from the back of the tank. The monster went blundering on.

Thirty seconds, forty. There was a concussion which drowned out even the roar of the storm. Vast fragments of masonry struck the tank.

Suddenly there was a light outside the vision-slits. There had been a

transmitter of darkness in the destroyed town. Deep in a sub-cellar, evidently, and sending out darkness from a buried aerial. Two hundred pounds of TNT had gone off above it. The transmitter might be destroyed, or it might be merely jammed. But for a space, there was light.

Those in the tank could see that there was a valley all about, and hill-sides rearing up on either hand. Except for the inevitable motion of objects past the tank, and four slug-like monsters crawling up a ribbon of concrete road, the tank-officer's main impression was that of utter deadness and lack of motion.

Wind blew upon his own machine with an unbearable, terrible force, but there was no sign of movement outside. There was no dust, no flying debris; there were no clouds. The wind blew with an awful force which had already demolished all things that could be destroyed, and now it kept up a horrible steady pressure that held all things immovable.

The sun shone down from a brazen sky, giving forth no heat, and wind blew and blew and blew.

Utter blackness fell again. Another transmitter of darkness had taken up the work of the one destroyed. And the wandering tank swung about and went crawling after the others on the now-blotted out concrete road.

CHAPTER VIII.

PRESTON'S FORTRESS.

HINES grinned savagely, up in the control-room.

"We got one of them!" he said grimly. "We got it by accident, maybe, but we got one of them!"

The speaking-tube whistled. The

tank officer answered, then turned to Hines.

"Tank Number Four thinks it has located another station. It is going ahead. The moment of light helped."

Grinding, pounding, roaring progress, with the wind a terrific pressure all about. One minute passed, two, three . . .

Light again. The leading tank was at the crest of the hill-road. Desolation was all about. Far away—miles and miles away, it seemed—there was a smother of white which would be a lake, with a dark spot upon it which would be a rocky islet.

Again the speaking-tube whistled.

"Number Four reports it set off two bombs. Light came on after the second."

Hines's jaws were clamped tightly.

"Every one destroyed," he said coolly, "helps to get the others. That's two of them, and we've got cats at the mouse-holes now!"

Again utter blackness. Mountains, the long straight stretch of white road descending, the frothing lake and the island at the end of the valley, all were blotted out. There was only the clanking of machinery and the bestial roar of the wind that thrust with a terrible force at the tanks.

Down the long road which no man could see. Despite the wall of wind without, the green mountainsides had seemed strangely inviting. And the sunlight had seemed brighter than ever the sun had seemed before. The deadly blackness was the more intolerable because weary eyes had looked upon the light again.

The machinery clanked and rumbled.

"Number Three tank reports—Number Seven also, that they have located transmitting stations—"

"One of them is wrong, maybe," said Hines coolly, "but let them both try."

The man at the steering-bar said quietly:

"We're nearly out of gas, Lieutenant. I just noticed it. Enough for two more miles, maybe."

The speaking-tube again.

"Number Three tank reports it exploded two bombs. Its station ceased to transmit, but the darkness still holds. Number Seven is letting go now. . . . Number Two has located a station. . . . Seven reports its station has ceased to transmit darkness. Number Two is bombing now. . . . Five has found its station."

"That completes the list," said Hines steadily, "if none of them made a mistake."

Again the voice from below.

"Two has put its station out of action. . . . Five fell into some sort of excavation. Can't get out at the moment. Asks for orders."

"If the ship can stand hand-grenades," said Hines savagely, "have them tossed out of all ports and see what happens."

Darkness. The pressure of the wind and its terrible steady roar. The noise of the machinery of the tank—

Light!

A GAIN sunlight. Again the mountains. Again the smother of white which was the lake ahead. The leading tanks advanced heavily until the concrete road divided into two, and one went along each shoreline. This lake had been a summer resort once, but now the trees were splintered and blown away. The houses were utterly destroyed. There was only the uncannily blue sky and the still-green grass carpet of the

shores, and a rocky small island half-smothered in foam.

The tank came to a cumbersome halt. Schaaf popped his whiskers through the companionway that led up to the control-room.

"Ha!" he said exuberantly. "We haff der son-of-a-gun! Hines, I haff to take some observations! I think and I suspect, but I haff to be sure where der last of der excitement takes place."

Hines stared about, and then pointed. A stony cliff reared upward some hundreds of yards to the right. It was forty or fifty feet high, and a heap of débris beneath it was proof that it created a lee. He indicated it in silence. The tank crawled heavily, smashing a way into the heaped-up trash.

Its engines coughed and stopped.

"Out of gas, sir," reported some one from below.

"It is no matter," said Schaaf blandly. "I haff a hunch. Der island ofer yonder is a charming place. One could establish a residence there and put in a power-house."

"Get a range-finder reading on it," said Hines curtly. "Have all the tanks range it."

Schaaf was cautiously opening the tank-door. He put one hand cautiously outside.

"Tie a rope around me," he said comfortably, "and I take a chance. There is a wind, but not such a hell of a wind. Der bank makes a lee."

He stepped outside with an electric-light extension and a square sheet of iron. It seemed peculiar, even futile, to be carrying an electric bulb in the overpoweringly bright sunshine. Schaaf balanced himself precariously.

Radiant heat could not be felt from the electric bulb; only in contact with the glass could its heat be detected. It

was an exact parallel with the light-waves that Preston could neutralize, but with a metal plate between the bulb and the source of the neutralizing short waves.

A gun went off not ten feet above his head. Schaaf swore and sat down violently. His necktie flopped about his face, blinding him for an instant. Then he heard the dull concussions of other guns. Every tank was firing madly with every gun it could bring to bear. And Schaaf swore bitterly as he saw what they were firing at.

THERE was a little rocky island out in the lake. The lake itself was a smother of white foam. But projecting upward above the water there was a mass of dark-brown rock some fifty or sixty feet high. There were traces of grass still upon it, but if there had been trees they were gone, and if there had been a summer residence that also had long since vanished in the Storm. But now, quite insolently, there was visible a signal of Preston's presence and of his defiance.

A globular mass of darkness had formed about the islet's peak. It looked as if Preston had turned on a transmitter of darkness and had deliberately begun to transmit the short waves with an absolute minimum of power. The fraction of a watt, perhaps, was being put into a hidden or a buried antenna. An irregular, amoeba-like globule of darkness hovered about the islet's tip.

Shells were bursting in and about it. A section of rock split outward from the island's side and fell into the foaming water. Instantly, it seemed, the globule of darkness expanded. From feet, its size could only be measured by hundreds of yards. The tanks were firing into a vast expanse of nothing-

ness, and one by one they ceased to fire. There was nothing to aim at.

Then, very swiftly, the darkness increased in size. Preston was putting more power into his transmitter. And quite suddenly the world was dark again.

It had been a gesture of pure insolence. Tanks could not reach the island. He had seen the gray monsters gathered on the shore, and Preston had blanketed the world in darkness after showing the only men to reach his stronghold the utter futility of further effort to reach him.

He was protected by the deep waters of a mountain lake from attack by tanks, by hills and the Storm from all other means of attack, and by the unthinkable blackness of his own creation even from assault by projectiles.

Up in the control-room, the tank-officer swore bitterly and turned to Hines.

"I think we're done, sir," he said savagely. "We can't wade out through the lake to him, and of course the Storm—"

Hines's eyes were slits.

"Let's look at the map," he said shortly. "We might as well get the other tanks alongside us, by the way. In the lee of this cliff, we can go from one to the other."

He had taken figures from the map before Schaaf came back inside the tank, cursing mightily in German. Hines was asking curt questions and giving even curter orders, and when the other tanks came clanking into place men went out into the alleviated storm beneath the cliff and made demands of gasoline and wire cable and bombs.

Two tanks only had fuel for a run of another two miles. The rest supplied cable and bombs, and men ginger-

ly unscrewed the fuses of the monster bombs and emptied four of the huge cases of all their contents. Then they labored terrifically to bind four still-loaded cases to the emptied ones, and fastened wire cable to the clumsy mass.

All this was done in darkness with the Storm roaring overhead, and while Schaaf was calculating feverishly at Hines's demand and the tank-officer was writing out his results in terms of formal orders, according to the customs and ordinances of the United States Army.

Then the ground quivered as two huge tanks moved away from their fellows. Now was the moment of greatest tension. The bombs had to be dragged over soft earth, and if they exploded with their loads of two hundred pounds each of T. N. T.—eight hundred pounds in the four loaded bombs—then the tank-force would be wiped out and Preston would win his single-handed war against the world. But the fuses had been changed, and they had hopes.

THERE were still three people up in the control-room of the tank that had carried Hines. One was Hines, of course, and one was the tank-commander, and Kathryn was the third. Hines knew the chance he was taking. If the tanks were wiped out, he wanted to be near Kathryn when the end came. Schaaf was down by the wireless transmitter, biting at his nails and growling guttural profanity at the intervals between reports.

"Both tanks have reached their first position," came the report up the speaking-tube. "They're reeling in the cable."

Hines held Kathryn protectively close. But it was rather useless. They

had combined four depth-bombs with four empty depth-bomb cases to make a monster floating bomb. They had fastened it in the center of a long, spliced-together steel cable, with a tank hauling at each end.

Those tanks were now posted where the shores of the lake began to curve together. They were reeling in their lines. When the lines tightened, the bomb would be dragged away from the now fuelless remnant of the tank-force and out into the water of the lake. With luck, the bombs would not go off. But if luck were bad, and a purposely insensitized fuse struck a rock or stone or bit of débris—

Long minutes went by. The speaking-tube whistle was a blessed sound.

"Reeling completed, sir. The cable is taut."

Two tanks now went crawling through the blackness down the opposite shores of the little lake. Between them stretched the cable with the monstrous floating bomb.

It is well known that fifty pounds of T. N. T. will shatter the walls of a submarine, and that a torpedo carries a hundred and fifty, and that the effect of an explosion varies as the square of the amount of explosive present. Eight hundred pounds of T. N. T. in one blast would sink any ship or shatter any rock.

But against the massive walls of even a small island?—well, it would produce a concussion. It might shake down fifty tons or a hundred tons of rock. It might do impressive local damage, to be sure, but the damage would be strictly local. The rest of the island would feel nothing worse than a sharp concussion. And that was all Hines could hope for.

Schaaf had assigned arbitrary co-ordinates and positions for the tanks'

reports. When their treads had covered so much ground in such-and-such directions, the cable should be out so much. . . .

"Second position reached," said the speaking-tube briefly. "All figures are as anticipated."

Hines's hands clenched fiercely. The range-finders had given the distance of the island. The map had given the outline of the lake. Down the center of the turmoil of frothing water a bomb of colossal destructive power was moving with two straining tanks towing it from the shore, and all for an absurdly trivial physical effect which was all that could be looked for.

"Third position reached," said the speaking-tube. "All figures seem correct. The tanks await orders."

"Tell them to go ahead," said Hines. His voice was hoarse. On this everything depended.

There was no movement inside the tank. There was no sound except the deep, deep roaring of the Storm overhead. But then, quite suddenly, the tank quivered all over. It was as if the ground had slipped, had quivered suddenly; as if it had been struck an abrupt though far from dangerous blow. It was just enough to bring Hines's elbow sharply into contact with the steering-bar.

But suddenly the tank-commander was snapping orders.

"Open fire! All guns!"

And the whole inside of the tank resounded with the sledge-hammer blows, the terrific impacts of guns firing at their highest rate.

FOR perhaps the last time, it seemed to Hines, the island was again in view. It was already the center of a storm of bursting shells. There was a colossal wave of water yet sub-

siding from beside it, and a huge column of rock was topping soundlessly and very deliberately into the lake, and every tank on the lake-shore was pouring shell after shell after shell upon the mass of stone that remained.

Hines had made his last gamble. The destruction of the other darkness-sending stations by concussions seemed to him to show one possible weakness in Preston's preparations.

It was not likely that in every case the dropped time-bombs that had put the other darkness-transmitters out of action, had made direct hits upon the apparatus. It seemed most probable that Preston, like all other experimenters with radio waves, had used vacuum tubes for his oscillators. And vacuum tubes are made of glass, and they are thin, therefore concussion will break them.

Hines had not expected the shock of the explosion against the island's rocky shore to destroy Preston's apparatus. Not at all. He had only hoped for a single sharp shock, a single smart snapping effect.

As a matter of fact, on the island itself there had been exactly the impression of a sudden and terrific earth-shock. And it was sudden enough to make the glass vacuum tubes of the short-wave transmitter shiver to atoms in their sockets. The transmitter was quite unharmed, but it was thoroughly useless after that!

Watching, with the flashes of high-explosive shells breaking about every portion of the island, Hines saw a sudden thick cloud of smoke arise. It was too dense, too thick, to be dissipated even by the wind which still blew madly. And great cracks appeared in the rocks of the island, and steam poured forth.

Schaaf went out of the tank with his

hands over his ears. He held up his face to the sun and abruptly began to dance with a wholly elephantine lack of grace. Because the sun's rays were warm!

Gradually, slowly, the tanks ceased firing. They exhausted their ammunition upon their target, and the surface of the island was a mass of splintered rock and steam poured in dense clouds from its interior.

Then it was possible to hear Schaaf bellowing.

"Der storm-wafes are off! Der storm-wafes are off! We got der son-of-a-gun! We got him!"

And very abruptly, it seemed, clouds were forming overhead, and the wind of the Storm began to change from a monstrous steady blast to something no worse than a mere tornado, and in an hour it was hardly more than a terrific gale.

Before nightfall thunder was rolling over a circle two thousand miles across, and rain was falling in torrents only preceded by the night before. Two weeks or more of chaotic weather conditions were being predicted by the weather bureaus, but after that the air conditions would again become normal.

SCHAAF was the first man on the island, and his gloomiest predictions were verified. Preston's apparatus had been destroyed by explosions from below. Not only had explosives been placed by Preston to ruin the apparatus and prevent it from being examined, but great masses of thermit had been placed here and there to complete the destruction. Apparently, Preston had intended to destroy his devices when their use was completed, and so had been prepared, by accident, for the disaster that came upon his

plans. No notes, no diagrams, no single article of any value to Schaaf was ever found, on which account he swore bitterly. But a human skeleton was found charred and half-consumed in the ruins of the underground workshop. It was assumed to be Preston, but Schaaf regarded even this hopeful thought with disfavor.

He expressed his bitterness after a complete round of the six other transmitting-stations showed them all destroyed with thermit and explosive, apparently by some contrivance which would act automatically when they were no longer operable.

"Der *verdammt* scoundrel," he said bitterly to Hines. "He gifes me a pain in der duodenum. If I had der information he had, I would be der greatest benefactor of der world! I haff an idea, and if I can only find out how he did his tricks, I show you der Golden Age again! *Ach, Gott!* Why is it that fillains haff der best brains?"

He was smoking furiously in Hines's apartment when he made his plaint. The telephone rang. Hines spoke into it, smiling. When he had ended, Schaaf said suspiciously:

"That was Miss Bush. She is clefer, Hines. But—is she too clefer?"

"Did you see how she wrote up the whole business for the *Star*?"

Schaaf nodded, and puffed at his pipe.

"She made you a hero, and me a hero, and she threw enough flowers at der tank-men to make der worldt see how brafe and courageous and altogether der cat's-whiskers you are, Hines. Yes. She is clefer. But as your friend I ask it; is she too clefer?"

Hines was standing up, now, and absently looking at his hat on a nearby chair.

"Too clever?" he repeated abstractedly, but smiling nevertheless. "What is too clever?"

"A woman," said Schaaf shrewdly, "that makes eferybody see how clefer der man she lofes is, is clefer. But when she sees that she has brains also, and that when she marries she will haff to take der back seat, and she sees that she is a darned fool to do it—then she is too clefer."

"She's not," said Hines blithely. "She's going to marry me. In fact, we're going down town now to pick out some rings and such things." He added perfunctorily: "Want to come along?"

"Nix," said Schaaf cynically. "You don't want me now. But I come in, Hines, *ach*, I come in when it is time to buy der teething-rings and der baby-mugs. Then I won't be in der way!"

THE END.





The five men jumped as the tree crashed to the ground

The Radio Gun-Runners

*Inside the earth is a strange world where fearful prehistoric monsters prowl—
and where a queerly assorted crew of yachtsmen and gangsters
are jestingly flung by Fate, to conquer or die*

By RALPH MILNE FARLEY

Author of "The Radio Flyers," "The Radio Planet," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

CRUISING in his seventy-five-foot yacht Miami, off northern Newfoundland, young Tom Jones is hijacked by gangsters, whose boat, engaged in gun-running from Canada to Central America, was sinking. Scar-face Boston Jimmy, chief of the gun-runners, takes command of the Miami, which is driven northward by terrific storms, and finally is caught in the polar ice.

An opening in the ice, leading northward, leads them over the edge of the world, and they find that the story of the Radio Flyers, who claimed there is no north pole, was true. Instead, there is a huge opening, over whose rim the sea flows into the inside of the earth, which is a hollow shell with a small central sun. Here the explorers find land, probably the same land where Angus Selkirk and Eric

This story began in the Argosy for February 22.

Redmond had joined the descendants of the lost Vikings in their war against the Eskimo-like natives, or Skraelings.

Scarface, a racketeer whose wide reading and great ambition makes him want to emulate Cæsar and Napoleon, lands to take possession of this country in his own name. His lieutenant, Nick Fratelli, steals the boat and leaves Scarface and his men marooned; but Nick gets drunk, the boat drifts, and Scarface and Tom Jones swim out and recapture it.

CHAPTER V.

THE SECOND INVASION.

LITTLE ARTY'S got Sydney, Australia, at last," Cicero Tony snickered, as the ex-jockey adjusted the radio with loving care.

"Sydney, me eye," scornfully retorted Arty. "They don't speak Choctaw in Australia. This must be one of the broadcasting stations of the underworld. Probably a bedtime story."

"Do they speak Choctaw in hell?" Schultz snapped back.

"They don't have bedtime, anyhow," put in Mike Murphy. "It's always noon down here."

"There aren't any broadcasting stations in this country," asserted Tom Jones. "That is, unless Redmond and Selkirk, those two aviators that preceded us here, have developed them since last fall. I think that Arty has got some regular outside-world station, probably in Russia, from the way the language sounds."

Charley Loy, with food, cut off further debate. Also Arty, in attempting to improve the receptivity, lost the wave-length and was unable to get it again. Perhaps the station had stopped sending.

After supper they all turned in, the Miami having been moored to the shore.

At breakfast the four drunken mutineers appeared, George, Scutari, the Swede, and the Eskimo Friday. They all had bad headaches and were feeling pretty rocky, so they ate nothing, and merely drank some black coffee.

Immediately following the meal Little Arty tuned in the radio again, and instantly got the same station as before.

Several groaned with disgust; but Swede, sick as he was, pricked up his ears with interest.

"Wassamatter, Swede?" asked the Syrian. "Is that stuff language?"

"Yah!" replied Johnson eagerly.

"Where from, do you think?"

"Sveden, I gass. Or Norvay. Or Danmark."

Scarface now snapped to attention.

"What are they saying?" he asked.

"Can you make out?"

"Yah!" replied Johnson, still listening intently. "They say one man fly scooter—"

"Glider?"

"Yah, glider. He say he fly scooter up nort' and see strange boat two hun-ert and fifty mile nort' east of plateau city. So t'ey better send up Vikings in many boats to see if ve mean funny business."

Scarface Jimmy leaped to his feet with his black eyes flashing.

"We've got our bearings," he shouted. "That thing we thought was a pterodactyl was really one of their scout-planes. We are two hundred and fifty miles northeast of our destination."

"So, Captain, set her course southwest, and let's go!"

"But which way is southwest?" asked Ferreira.

"You, a ship-captain!" began Scarface.

BUT the Portuguese interrupted: "Do these inner-world Swede Vikings consider east to be on the *right* of north as it ought to be, or do they consider east to be on the left of *north*, as it really is down here?"

"Damfino," replied Scarface, stumped for once. "What do you think, Tom?"

"It seems to me," said the Harvard man slowly, "that when the expedition of Bishop Uppri was blown here in 1121, they couldn't possibly have known where they were. Even if they had known, they would have lacked the scientific training to figure out that 'east is west, and west is east' inside the earth—and their descendants would have kept the same direction-ideas. Accordingly, when this scout reported that we were northeast of their city, he meant northwest. Furthermore, as we went over the polar rim about a hundred and fifty miles west of the point where Eric and Angus did, this checks with that. So we ought to steer southeast."

"That's all very well," replied Ferreira. "First the boss says southwest, and then you say southeast. Which is right?"

"We're both right," asserted Tom Jones. "Steer four points to starboard of south."

"Let's go," added Scarface.

"Try an' do it," objected Captain Ferreira. "There's nothing but land in that direction."

"Can't we skirt the land?" asked Tom.

"Don't you remember," replied Ferreira, "how it looked from the top of that mountain we climbed? The land goes on forever."

"I have it," exclaimed Scarface. "Let's go back north, round the point of this land, and then strike southeast, or southwest, or whichever it is. Let's go!"

So that was the course they laid, skirting the shore to the northward, around the cape, and then straight out to sea "four points to starboard of south."

Two days—or, rather, two sleeps—later, land appeared ahead. Through the ship's telescope they could see a high rocky plain. And out of the middle of the plain rose a small and precipitous plateau, crowned with stone buildings.

"This is it, at last!" exclaimed Scarface Jimmy. "They know that we are here, so concealment now would be a waste of time. We must land at once, and attack before reinforcements arrive from their city to the south."

"I tank you make wan beeg mistake fight all t'ose Svede," remarked the Scandinavian member of the party half to himself.

Captain Ferreira announced, "It will be four or five hours at least before we can reach the shore, though it's the devil of a job to judge distances on a sea that curves up, instead of down, and has no horizon."

"In that case," commanded Scarface, "everybody except Ferreira and Jones had better turn in and snatch some sleep, so that we shall all be fresh for whatever may be ahead of us. This eternal noonday sun has one advantage: we can pick our days and nights to suit our own convenience."

So every one, except the pilot and the engineer, went to bed.

A considerable time later Tom Jones entered the bunk room and roused them all from their slumbers.

"The Miami is about to dock," he

announced with a grin. "Last call for dinner in the dining car."

The men "hit the deck" and started to dress. Cicero Tony Schultz, ordinarily very slovenly, made a wild dash to the galley for a cup of hot water, and started to shave.

Little Arty looked at him long and suspiciously, then announced with a snicker, "Hey, gang, laugh this off—our Cicero is sheiking himself up, to make a hit with all the beautiful corn-fed Swede girls when we land."

"He is, at that!" snorted Nick Fratelli. "Guess he figures there'll be a welcome for a Dutch boy-friend, with a bunch of blond what-do-you-call-'em—Nordics—around."

Cicero growled, inarticulate with angry embarrassment.

THERESA did not join them at the early meal, nor was there any sound of movement in her cabin. Scarface warned the men to make no noise near the cabin. "If she doesn't wake up, so much the better. I don't want to take her ashore, and I never did like to argue with a woman."

All through breakfast, Swede Johnson was muttering to himself. Finally some one demanded to know what was biting him.

"T'ose Viking von't be so easy, I tank not," he grumbled. "I tank you make von great mistake."

Nick looked at him shrewdly, and took occasion to lean over and murmur a few words to him as Scarface left the table to go on deck.

When they finally assembled outside the mess-room, they looked out on a crescent-shaped beach, backed by abrupt cliffs which were crested by forest. There was no break in the cliffs as far as eye could reach, but while they were steep, they were broken up

and looked as if they might be safe to climb with care.

"Not wishing to get bitten twice in the same spot," announced Scarface Jimmy, "I shall leave Nick Fratelli behind, still in irons, and in the custody of Mike Murphy. All the rest of you men will come with me, except of course the Chink. Thus I shan't be taking any chances on another drunken orgy. I shall rather need this ship, you know, for further operations."

Each of the nine members of the shore-party was furnished a rifle, an automatic, plenty of ammunition, and several days' supply of compressed rations.

Murphy rowed them ashore in the tender.

Scarface, in his commodore's uniform, lined up his squad of eight sailors on the beach, and had them present arms to Mike Murphy, as Charley Loy leaned nonchalantly over the rail above them with a broad grin on his face. It seemed a bit too much dog. But, at that, the nine on the beach did present a very military—or rather naval—appearance, in their smart sailor uniforms, with rifles, ammunition belts, pistols in holsters, and packs. Scarface Boston Jimmy always had a good eye for the picturesque.

The ceremony over, the "commodore" led the way up the face of the cliff, closely followed by Tom, Arty, and Ferreira. It was a difficult climb, and they did not notice that the other five were lagging behind. Aboard the Miami, Charley Loy had already disappeared into the galley.

"Murphy," softly called Syrian George, dropping on his knees on the beach and appearing to examine something in the sand, "you're a good Irishman. Come here and tell me if this ain't a shamrock."

Murphy stepped out of the beached rowboat and strode across the sand to the little group. Swede Johnson stepped behind him and crashed his pistol-butt against the base of the Irishman's skull, and Murphy sagged, to be soundlessly eased to the ground by Scutari. Murphy was out cold, perhaps dead.

"So much for cops," muttered George. "How about pottin' those guys up on the cliff?"

"No use," Cicero decided. "We'll just leave 'em here for the Vikings to play wit'. Come on, gang."

At a run the five—Cicero, Scutari, George, Swede Johnson, and the Eskimo—made their way to the boat and shoved off. A very few strokes and they were at the Miami, clambering aboard.

It had all been done so quietly that the first warning to reach the panting cliff-climbers was the sound of the Miami's engines. They clung precariously to the steep incline as they craned around, and realized how they had again been tricked. Scarface showed his qualities of leadership by his instant decision.

"Quick! Make it to the top of the cliff!"

Back on the Miami, Nick the Rat appeared on deck, still handcuffed. George the Syrian, who had frisked Mike for his keys, announced as much, and dug into his pocket for them.

"Why didn't you plug those four birds?" demanded Nick viciously. The men looked at him like kicked dogs who had expected to be patted. Then they stared accusingly at Cicero. He hastened to explain:

"We was makin' a clean get-away. Why start a gun battle and run the risk of gettin' plugged?"

"Fool!" Fratelli sneered. "Hurry

up and get them, now, while they're still on the cliff."

AT the command, some of the men unslung their rifles and blazed away at the cliffside. Chunks of rock flew as the exposed four scrambled wildly up toward safety. Captain Ferreira suddenly let go his hold, and seemed to float backward, then tumbled swiftly head over heels down to the beach below.

Tom Jones was first to reach the brink of the cliff, and scuttled behind a boulder. Then, unslinging his rifle, he poured a hot fire on the Miami's sharpshooters. It was well for Little Arty and Scarface that he did so, for the Swede's rifle was knocked out of his hands, and the others on the boat dodged for shelter. Under cover of Tom's fire, the two on the cliff-side reached safety.

Scarface's first shot, intended for Fratelli, hit George the Syrian instead, as that unlucky mutineer reached over to unlock Nick's handcuffs. George staggered at the impact, tottered wildly, and then tumbled over the Miami's rail into the sea. But the keys jangled to the deck, and Fratelli awkwardly scooped them up with both tethered hands. Then, as more shots whistled perilously near him, he dashed through one of the doorways of the boat, and was lost to view.

The marooned trio blazed away vengefully, and their bullets repeatedly splintered the windows of the pilot-house; but, as none of the enemy happened to be in there, this didn't do much good—or harm, depending on the point of view.

The Miami backed straight out. Finally it became evident that some one aboard had at last taken charge of the wheel, for her straight backing changed

to a gentle curve until she lay broadside of them. Then her engines were reversed, she started ahead, and curved forward out to sea. No further shots were fired from on board.

"They're saving their powder, Arty," said Scarface, getting to his feet. "So we'd better save ours, too. Are you all right, Tom?"

"Yes; but where's Ferreira?"

The Miami was nearly out of range now, so they crept to the edge of the cliff and looked down—to see two still, crumpled figures.

Leaving Scarface and Arty to cover him from possible attack from the Miami, Tom clambered back down the cliff. He found that Ferreira was beyond human aid, sprawled horribly at the cliff's foot with a broken neck.

But Murphy was only stunned. Hatfuls of water thrown in his face finally revived him, and in time he found that his dizziness was sufficiently abated so that he could attempt the climb, to join Scarface and Arty.

"Well, it's one heat for each," said the little jockey, Arty. "They got Ferreira, and we got George."

"Yeah?" drawled Scarface. "But Nick's ahead—for the time. He got the boat."

"And Theresa!" cried Tom.

CHAPTER VI.

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN.

ABOARD the Miami, Nick Fratelli dashed through the door of the mess-room. Cicero Tony Schultz was inside, lying low.

"Afraid to get shot, eh?" sneered Nick. "Well, you just take these keys and let me loose, quick, or you'll be in worse danger than you'd be in on deck!"

But it required some time before the fumbling fingers of the German found the right key and slipped the handcuffs off the hands of his new leader.

Just as this was accomplished, Theresa, awakened by the shooting, came dewy-eyed and sleepy out of the doorway of her private stateroom, only to be immediately seized and manacled, before she had time to realize what a revolution had taken place.

This accomplished, Fratelli rushed to the pilot house, and, crawling along the floor to avoid the bullets which were crashing through the windows, took hold of the wheel and brought the vessel around. Then, signaling full speed ahead to Scutari, who was in the engine-room, Nick steered for open sea.

Swede Johnson had been shot only through the left hand, and had long since crawled to safety, followed by the Eskimo. Charley Loy had remained discreetly under his bunk during the entire disturbance.

When safely out of range from the shore, the Miami turned south, and finally tied up behind a small island, which looked as though it would make a good headquarters. Then the new leader of the gang gathered his forces in the mess-room.

There was Nick the Rat, himself. Charley Loy and Theresa, both sullen and reticent. Swede, with his left hand bandaged. Cicero, Scutari and Friday. And the black cat, misnamed Tabby.

The habitually sullen Italian gangster was almost genial.

"Boys," he began.

Theresa pouted.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began again.

Theresa grinned.

Nick tried a third peroration. "Whereas in the course of—er—"

Theresa snickered. "Who d' you think you are—Captain Jimmy?"

"Look here, you little Portuguese guttersnipe," he growled, "if you don't stop handing me the raspberries, you get your face slapped, and besides, I'm going to—"

"Gee now, Mr. Fratelli," interrupted Terry beguilingly, "a nice kind gentleman like you wouldn't do that to poor little me, I'm sure."

Nick, quickly placated, smirked at her, and continued: "What I started to say was that we are now shut of that conceited fake navy-officer, and have a real man as leader, we're all set. I'm going to keep the booze locked up, just as he did."

Frowns all around.

"But I'm going to be much more liberal in handing it out."

Smiles again.

"Friday, here, has been teaching me to talk Eskimo language. Swede has been right, all along, in saying that it is foolish for a small party of us to try to buck all the Vikings. But, with Friday as interpreter, we can line up all the natives and use them to fight the Vikings with. I've got more brains than Jimmy, even if I don't read as many books, or talk as high-and-mighty, as he does."

It was a long speech for the usually sullen Italian. Loud applause greeted the announcement.

Then Fratelli continued: "Now let's search the ship. But lay off the rum-lockers."

THE search disclosed the store of rifles and ammunition, beyond their wildest dreams. The two machine guns were promptly brought out and mounted in the bow and stern.

Then, while the Chink prepared a meal, assisted by Terry as well as was

possible in her shackled condition, the others went ashore to explore the island. It turned out to be unusually devoid of underbrush, but thickly wooded, giving it a parklike appearance. In the ground, among the trees, were numerous large holes, each with a pile of earth in front of it.

"I tank von big boog," said Swede, looking cautiously down one of the holes.

"It must be a big bug, to make a hole like that!" replied Fratelli.

Just at that instant a pungent smell was wafted down the breeze, and Cicero, who had been some distance beyond them, came running back yelling: "Skunks! And *Gott in Himmel*, such skunks!"

And after him trotted two black-and-white striped animals about the size of bears. The entire party promptly clambered up the nearest tree, Swede nearly getting captured because hampered by his sore hand.

Luckily it turned out that the skunks couldn't climb, but they nosed about at the foot of the tree interminably—and odorously. The sun hung motionless in the center of the sky, and the two beasts seemed oblivious of the passage of time.

At last, however, they hurried away.

The five men were just about to descend, when Swede remarked: "I tank dey vere frighten' by somet'ing."

Quite true, for at that moment a long-haired, clumsy animal, considerably larger than an elephant, lumbered into sight. Its hind feet were placed squarely on the ground in walking like those of a bear or of a man, but the claws on its front feet were so long that it had to plant the sides of those feet, rather than the soles of them, on the ground. This gave it a curious, waddling gait.

Upon reaching the foot of their tree, this huge beast reared up on its hind legs and embraced the trunk with its fore legs.

"We're goners!" cried Cicero Tony. "*This one can climb.*"

But, instead of climbing, it hooked its claws around the trunk and leaned backward. The tree swayed with the movement, nearly shaking off the men like five pieces of ripe fruit.

Holding on with one paw, the megatherium reached higher up with the other and took a new hold. The tree bent a little further. The process was repeated, and the tree bent still further.

The men, now almost within reach, scrambled higher among the branches. But the beast persisted in its slow inexorable tactics, and the tree bent lower and lower.

At last the men reached the top of the tree, and the top of the tree had been bent down so that it nearly touched the ground.

There seemed to be but one thing to do. The five men jumped, and ran for their lives to the shore.

But the beast did not pursue them. In fact, he seemed as oblivious of their presence as if they had been so many bugs. He sat on his haunches, calmly nibbling the tender shoots of the crown of the tree. It was for these, rather than for the men, that he had gone to all the trouble of hauling the tree to the ground.

BUT one misfortune followed another. As they reached the beach, they heard the chugging of a motor. The Miami was backing out into the sea, and already was clearly out of reach.

"Turn about is fair play," philosophically remarked Scutari.

"The hell you say!" roared Fratelli. "We left the others on the mainland with several days' rations, and within a few hours' walk of a civilized city. They wanted to go conquering the blamed thing, anyway. But here we are on a dinky little island, full of tree-pullers and over-sized skunks."

At that moment, the sound of the motors ceased.

"Quick," shouted Nick. "Who can swim?"

"I can, a little," replied Scutari.

"Then hop to it," commanded Nick. "Fetch me that boat."

Without waiting to strip, the Greek plunged in.

Meanwhile, on board the Miami, little Terry was holding the wheel in her manacled hands, and the Chinaman in the engine room was frantically trying to restart the stalled engine. The girl rang the bell several times for full speed ahead, and then rushed aft to see what was the matter.

She had scarcely entered the engine room when she heard a step on the deck, and knew it was one of Nick's men. Instantly she grappled with the startled Chinaman. So, when Scutari entered, dripping, it appeared as though a fight were in progress for the control of the boat.

"Gee, Mr. Scutari," she exclaimed, with pretended relief, as Scutari's pistol-threat halted the struggle, "Charley Loy started the engines and tried to make his get-away, but I stopped the engines. He couldn't be here and in the pilot house both at once. Gee, Mr. Scutari, I'm glad you got here just in time."

"Charley," commanded the Greek, "you stay right here. Terry, you go to the wheel and steer her in shore again. You're a good kid. I'll see that Nick remembers you for this."

Charley Loy stared with bewilderment at Terry's retreating figure, but he said nothing. Saying nothing at the appropriate time is the chief accomplishment of the heathen Chinee.

Scutari had but little difficulty in starting the engine. The trouble was merely a disconnected wire, which he naturally assumed to have been Terry's work. So this lent plausibility to her story, which he never thought to question, anyway.

As the Miami neared the beach and stopped, Nick the Rat waded aboard and rushed into the pilot house.

"You dirty little gutter-brat—" he began.

But Scutari, anticipating some such development, arrived just in time from the engine room and cut in with: "Chief, you've got her all wrong. It's her that saved the boat for us. The Chink tried to slip away, but she pulled one of the wires loose and stopped the engine. The two of them was fighting to get at the wire, when I came aboard."

"Is that so?" asked Nick, a bit incredulously.

"Gee, Mr. Fratelli, you didn't think I'd leave *you*, didja?" replied Terry archly, and Nick the Rat was vain enough to believe her.

"Let's get away from this damn' island," urged Cicero, glancing furtively back at the woods.

"Let's feed the Chink to the skunks first," suggested Scutari.

"Let's not!" emphatically replied Nick. "It's more important for us to eat, than for the skunks to."

"And I tell you," hastily added Theresa, "you take these awful things off my wrists, and I'll cook you up a beautiful cake for supper, or whatever time of day it is."

She smiled her sweetest on the al-

ready smitten gangster, who promptly removed the handcuffs.

"That's a fine idea of yours about the cake," said he, smirking, "but you just wait here a moment, my little cutie, until I go into the galley and give that dirty Chink a piece of my mind. I'll put the fear of God into him, so he'll never dare try to double cross *me* again."

And he swaggered aft to berate the cook.

AS the Miami once more put to sea, with Fratelli at the wheel, the Greek at the engine and Charley and Theresa in the galley, the three others repaired to the bunk room.

"This is something like!" remarked Cicero to Swede and Friday. "Why, before, with that crowd on board, there wasn't room enough to swing a cat by the tail."

"Vy you vant to sving a cat by tail?" asked Swede.

"Just a little hobby of mine," replied Cicero. Then, half to himself: "Why not! That black Tabby cat has been our Jonah. Here goes. Come on, if you want to see some fun."

So saying, he rushed out on deck, followed by the other two. Tabby was peacefully sunning himself.

A moment later Theresa heard a frantic miaou; and, glancing out one of the galley portholes, saw her precious kitty, held by the end of its tail in one of Cicero's large hands, as he whirled the yowling feline round and round his head.

With a scream, the girl rushed on deck, but she was too late. As she flung herself upon Cicero Tony, he let go the tail, and the black cat, with a howl like the drone of a 75 mm. projectile, described a perfect parabola in the air and hit the water with a smack.

Swede, who had been in France in 1918, watched the spot for a moment and then remarked:

"A dud."

A second splash occurred where the cat had fallen. Some denizen of the deep had risen to the bait.

"Delayed fuse," murmured Swede.

"Oh, you beast, you beast," cried Theresa, pounding and clawing Cicero with her little fists, but Swede pulled her away and shook her, and sent her back to the galley in tears.

Then the three men returned to the bunk room, Swede remarking: "I tank it bad luck kill a cat."

"Worse luck to have a damn black cat aboard," growled Cicero.

Shortly thereafter Nick called Swede to take the wheel. Then he himself entered the galley.

Smirking at Terry, he said: "Well, my little sweetheart, how's the cake coming?"

"Gee, Mr. Fratelli," said the girl, with tears in her eyes, "won't you do something to that awful Dutchman? He threw Tabby overboard and a fish ate him."

"Ate who? Tony?"

"No. Tabby," replied Terry, smiling through her tears. "You're a big strong man, Mr. Fratelli. Won't you put Tony in irons or something, just to please me?"

"I'd do anything to please you, girlie," asserted Nick, "but you've got to be nice to me."

"Gee, Mr. Fratelli, but you're great!"

"Call me Nick."

"Gee, Nick, but you're great!"

He held out one hand tentatively toward her, but she edged shyly away, saying: "I've gotter finish the cake now. See you after supper."

So, with that promise in his ears, Fra-

telli went to the bunk room for a conference with Friday, the Eskimo.

THE cake was a great success. All enjoyed the meal except Cicero, who, being in irons for the delectation of the queen and the gratification of Nick's pride of power, could hardly be expected to be very jovial. Terry particularly made up to the chief, who smirked and smiled and behaved quite unlike his usual morose self.

After the meal, as the girl started to enter her room, Nick remarked pointedly, with a wave of his hand toward the door: "The captain's cabin will be occupied by the new captain, from now on."

Terry was a bit taken aback for a moment, then smiled her sweetest on him and said: "I've got to help Charley with the dishes for a few moments. Wait for me in your cabin."

Then she and the Chinaman started clearing away the table. During the meal the boat had been permitted just to drift. Now Fratelli ordered Swede to man the wheel and Scutari to start up the engine again. The Eskimo, he directed to take Cicero to the bunk room. He himself began moving his belongings into his new quarters. He could scarcely wait for the dishwashing to be over.

As the last load of dishes were being carried to the galley, Charley Loy said quietly to his helper: "Velly bad. Velly bad. Makee tubble for little girl."

"Oh, I'm all right," asserted Terry, with a toss of her head, "I asked that bum Fratelli to wait for me; and, believe me, he'll wait!"

The Miami was now skirting the shore of the mainland.

"Good-by, Charley," continued the girl. "You're a good scout, so I'll

give you a bit of advice. When Nick gets tired of waiting, and asks you where I am, it would be wise for you to tell him that I went to his cabin. Savvy?"

The Oriental beamed on her.

"You velly blight girl," said he.

Meanwhile Nick Fratelli, at peace with the world, and very proud of himself as a gang leader and ladies' man, waited in his newly-acquired cabin. He waited with keen anticipation.

Then he waited with impatience. Then he waited with growing anger, and finally with suspicion.

At last he strode back to the galley. The dishwashing was completed. Charley Loy was industriously sweeping.

"Where's Terry?" roared Fratelli.

The Chinaman jumped, as though startled. Then turning his artless poker-face toward Nick, he said: "Little girl just left minute before. Say she go see her boy fiend now. Solly. Velly solly."

And he resumed his sweeping.

"Search the ship," bellowed Fratelli, rushing out of the kitchen.

Quickly he roused the rest of the crew. The ship was stopped, and all joined in the search. But at last it became quite evident that Miss Theresa Ferreira was no longer on board.

"Chief," whined Cicero, "you done me dirt. You put me in irons just to please that moll. I'm loyal to you. Won't you take them things off'n me?"

"Tony," replied Fratelli apologetically, "forgive me. But if I ever get my hands on that dirty little Portuguese gutter-snipe again, she'll pay for this! That's all I have to say."

"Well, chief," said Cicero vengefully, "it's a cinch you never will see her again, for by now she's et up by fishes, just like that cat was."

And he smiled reminiscently.

Nick looked sad.

"Poor little kid."

AT that moment, many miles to the north of them, a pathetic feminine figure, clad in a wet and clinging male sailor suit, was bravely trudging northward along the beach. As she wearily stumbled through the sand, she was glad to be safe from Fratelli, but she was tired and thirsty, and utterly devoid of any plans.

Finally she sat down on a rock to rest, and as she gazed listlessly around her, her interest was aroused by a large black and white object, which the waves were carrying in toward shore. It seemed to be a black fish about ten feet long with a white belly, floating belly-up. But there was one unnatural feature about it, namely, a small round fuzzy black rosette, wiggling violently in the middle of the white expanse.

Momentarily forgetting her fatigue, the girl jumped up and ran down to the water's edge, where the dead "fish" was already bumping upon the pebbles. It was a porpoise-like reptile, an ichthyosaurus.

"Miaou," said the dead fish.

Theresa started backward in surprise, and at that moment the fuzzy object, protruding from the center of the fish's belly, gave a lurch, the white skin of the reptilian fish split the rest of the way, and Tabby followed its head out of the opening, stretching itself and arching its back.

"You darling kitty," exclaimed Terry, snatching it up and hugging it to her bosom, in spite of its slimy condition. "I thought you were gone forever! That mean old Cicero called you his Jonah, so you picked out a pocket-edition whale for yourself and got saved! It's a good joke on him."

She felt better instantly. Here was a companion for her. A few minutes later she lay stretched on the beach in the warm sun, while Tabby lay beside her, purring and lapping himself, and the dead ichthyosaurus bumped up and down forgotten on the pebbles.

When the cat at last considered himself presentable again, he arose languidly, stretched first his back and then one hind leg after the other, looked up at the girl and purred, and then trotted off into the woods which lined the beach. Theresa got up and followed.

Tabby led her promptly to a small spring, where they both drank copiously. Then, without a word of warning, the cat slipped quietly into the underbrush and disappeared.

A wave of loneliness suddenly engulfed the brave little girl. Slumping down beside the spring, she burst into tears. But after a while she dried her eyes. Perhaps Tabby would come back again.

He did. He returned dragging with him a funny dead animal as large as himself, which he laid proudly at his mistress's feet. Then he rubbed against her, purring loudly and ostentatiously.

The dead animal looked like an overgrown guinea pig, with long legs and a mule-like head and tail.

"Oh, Tabby dear," said the girl, "I can't eat raw bunny. Here, you take it, while I hunt for some berries."

The cat looked at her and at the rejected gift sadly and then started a repast on the carcass.

Theresa found a few small berries, but their taste was acrid and she mistrusted them. At last she came to a tree which bore orange-like fruit as large as pumpkins. She poked one off the tree with a pole, but was unable to lift it.

The skin smelled unmistakably like

an orange, so she dug into the skin, and found it to be several inches thick. But the fruit skinned readily, and as readily divided into segments. In fact, it was exactly like an orange inside.

Peeling the thin transparent membrane off one of the segments, Theresa was soon regaling herself with the cells of luscious orange-colored and orange-flavored liquid which made up the interior of the segment, and which she plucked out and ate one by one.

Their meal over, she lay down, with Tabby snuggled close beside her, and soon was fast asleep.

But her sleep was not untroubled. Presently she dreamed that she was in a close and stuffy room. She opened her eyes to awake.

A fetid breath was blowing in her face. She looked up into the slaverling jaws of a gigantic doglike head!

CHAPTER VII.

THE RED MAMMOTH.

MEANWHILE Scarface Boston Jimmy, with Tom Jones, late of Harvard, and Arty, the little old jockey, had sadly buried the body of Antone Pease Ferreira. Mike Murphy's head still ached frightfully from the pistol-butt blow, but otherwise he seemed in fit shape.

There was no point in staying where they were, and no place to go, except toward the Viking city. So the four set off together up a trail which they found leading inland from the top of the cliff. After several hours of hiking, and stopping once for lunch, their road finally led to the edge of a level plain, across which, a half mile or so away, they could see the steep cliffs of the plateau which they had observed from the sea.

Persons were gathered in one spot on the edge of the cliff, and even as the watchers gazed up from within the cover of the wood, those persons disappeared one by one, only to reappear among the bushes at the foot of the cliff. A glider slid off the crest of the plateau, circled the plain, and returned to its starting point.

"Just the way it was in that ARGOSY story," Scarface exulted. "We're here at last!"

"Yeah?" replied Little Arty pessimistically. "And what good does it do you? Are you planning for the four of us to attack all those squareheads?"

"Not exactly," said Jimmy. "We must use strategy now."

"Why not use just plain human decency?" suggested Tom Jones. "Come to the Vikings as friends, and mean it. Eric and Angus played square—"

"Played squarehead, you mean," interrupted Arty.

"Well, anyway," continued Jones, "it worked, didn't it? Eric and Angus are now sitting on top of the world—or inside the world—oh, it's all so complicated! Anyway, let's try the same tactics."

"We may be forced to that, as a last resort," admitted Scarface.

"Say, what about Theresa?" Tom asked suddenly. "Here we've been worrying about dreams of empire, and lamenting because Nick Fratelli has walked off with our boat, when all the while that poor little girl is in the clutches of those roughnecks. Mr. Le-favour, sir, we've just got to side in with the Vikings, and get them to help us rescue Theresa."

Scarface looked at Tom appraisingly.

"I had thought of that myself." He was obviously torn between two ruling passions. "I shall settle that question. Come on."

So together the four set forth across the plain toward the spot where they had seen the Vikings emerge.

They had little difficulty in finding the hole in the bushes. Crawling through it, they came to a crack extending vertically upward in the face of the cliff, and up this crack they clambered, by virtue of many foot-holds, hand-holds and knee-holds in its sides. But when they reached the top, the way was barred by a stone slab set firmly across the opening. Try as they would, they could not budge it. They shouted repeatedly, but no answer came. No one heeded them.

So, at last, they climbed down again, and crawled out through the bushes at the base.

After staring disconsolately for a while at the heights, they withdrew to the shelter of the woods, where they had supper and then slept, taking turns watching one by one, so that they would know if the expedition from the plateau returned, or if any further signs of life showed at the brink of the cliff. But there were no developments.

FINALLY Scarface roused them. "I've had enough of sitting here like this, doing nothing. We ought to be getting busy rescuing that girl. This isn't proving anything."

"Let's walk around the foot of the plateau," suggested Tom. "Perhaps we can attract some attention somewhere. If not, we shall just have to come back and wait here, until that expedition returns. I wish they'd hurry. Every minute may count with poor little Terry."

So they started circling the base of the cliff, munching their breakfast as they walked, and shouting and hallooing from time to time.

And at last an answer came to one of their calls. But not from the cliff top. Instead, it came from around a bend ahead of them. And it was a most peculiar sound, more like a squeaky Fourth of July tin horn than anything else—a giant's horn, loud as a calliope.

"Queer bugles these Swedes have," remarked Murphy.

"Bugle, hell! Look what broke loose from the circus!" yelled Little Arty, who was in the lead.

Around the bend, at a ponderous canter, came an enormous elephant-like creature with long red fur, trumpeting loudly as he came—a mammoth!

"Run!" cried Tom, and the four of them scattered in as many directions, as the beast bore down upon them.

Three of them were sure of escape, for the woolly red elephant could not chase all four at once. The mammoth selected Scarface Jimmy as his victim. Clumsy though the huge animal appeared to be, he could run as fast as a man, or a little faster. So Scarface shed his dignity without a thought and fled as never before in his life.

Straight toward a clump of trees he ran, and seized a branch and pulled himself up, just in time. It was not enough merely to gain the low-hanging branch. Up the tree he scrambled, scraping off bark and clothing and skin. He had scarce got above the level of the beast's head before it crashed against the trunk with an impact which nearly hurled the man from his perch.

Then, backing up, the mammoth reared and reached for the man with its trunk. Scarface, scrambling upward again, just barely eluded the snakelike menace. Thereupon the mammoth withdrew for a short distance and began a series of battering-ram rushes at the tree.

Scarface hung on for dear life each time, and thus escaped being shaken off; but the tree itself gradually yielded at the roots, and began to bend more and more, under the successive blows.

The elephant, finding that the tree had begun to loosen at the roots, changed his tactics and, placing his huge head squarely against the trunk, braced all four of his legs and began to push steadily. Inch by inch, the tree gave; there was nothing Scarface could do but climb higher and higher.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VIKINGS.

TERRY stared up at those slaver-ing jaws. For a long, ghastly moment she lay motionless with terror, tensing as one does when trying to wake from an unbearable nightmare. Then something slapped against her side.

It was the lashing tail of Tabby, suddenly awakened, and confronted with the largest dog that the poor cat had ever seen in all its nine lives.

Now, when a dog chases a cat, the cat flees.

But when a dog corners a cat, the cat goes absolutely berserk and attacks after the general manner of a rapidly rotating buzz saw.

Tabby, suddenly awakened, imagined himself cornered by the huge hyænodont, and so sprang full in the beast's face, with every hair on end, and four sets of claws rotating at full speed.

The last that Theresa saw of the two animals, the hyænodont, with its tail between its legs, and emitting loud but very doglike yelps, was galloping off for dear life through the woods, with Tabby perched on the beast's back, feet

close together, claws digging in, back arched, and inflated tail erect.

Partly through sheer nervous relief, and partly because of the real humor of the situation, Theresa sat up and laughed uncontrollably. Finally she arose, drank and washed at the spring, and ate from another of the huge orange-fruit.

Just as she was finishing her breakfast, she heard voices approaching through the woods. Hastily backing behind some bushes, she lay in their protecting-concealment.

In that direction, which was uphill from where she lay, there was a high rocky ledge. As she gazed, a bronze helmet appeared, surmounted with a pair of golden wings. Beneath the helmet, she saw long yellow hair, a rugged, tanned face, blue eyes, and a wavy yellow mustache. A scarlet cape, flung across massive shoulders, was caught at the throat with a gold buckle.

The man's sinewy arms bore bracelets of various metals.

His left hand clasped the wooden shaft of a steel-tipped spear. A shirt of chain-mail hung almost to his knees. A sword-belt, slung across the hips, supported a cross-hilted slender blade. He had long leggings, strapped with criss-crossed leather thongs.

The first Viking was followed by another, somewhat similarly garbed, except that the second wore a yellow cape and a purple shirt, and carried a spiked club and a burnished shield.

After him came an older man, with flowing white beard, and a green cape and scarlet shirt.

Others followed, some with clubs and shields, and some with spears and shields, until about twenty warriors stood on the summit of the rock.

"Gee, ain't they swell!" breathed Terry to herself, lost in admiration for

these supermen out of the past. And then, remembering that these were the enemy, the people from whom her expedition intended to wrest the dominion of this continent, a sudden terror swept over her.

Losing all discretion in her fright, she jumped to her feet and fled precipitately, frantically, through the wood.

"*Staaap!*" bellowed several lusty voices behind her. It sounded like English, and there was no question as to its meaning. Perhaps, she thought, it really was English. Perhaps these fantastically clothed men were not Vikings after all, but Americans. Perhaps they were only movie actors.

Most illiterates and most young folks have an absolute mental gap on the subject of location and distance. Although they can uncannily find their way around, yet it would not surprise them in the least to discover San Francisco lying a few hours east of New York, or to walk from Boston to London, England, in the course of an afternoon, without crossing any water.

Theresa was both young and illiterate, and so it is not strange that she harbored the idea of meeting a motion picture troupe in the center of the earth.

SHE turned the possibility over in her mind as she ran on, and was just about to give up anyway when a heavy hand fell on her shoulder and put a stop to her flight.

The hand wheeled her roughly around, and another hand grasped her other shoulder. She looked up, affrighted, into a pair of kind and rather puzzled blue eyes beneath a winged helmet. She was in the grip of the Viking leader, the one of the red cloak and the chain-mail. But he did not

seem so formidable, close up. And his intentions appeared to be friendly.

"Gee, but you had me frightened for a moment, sir," said Terry, with her most engaging smile.

In reply, she was deluged with questions in a strange tongue, at which she was able only to shake her head in bewilderment. The chief remarked something significantly to one of his followers.

"Say, do you belong to Eric Redmond?" asked Terry.

"Yah, yah, Eric Redmond," replied the chief and again remarked something significantly to his follower.

After further conversation among the Vikings, the chief turned back to Terry and said, "*Komm!*"

So she came. The party set off briskly into the interior, the girl in her blue and white sailor suit walking proudly by the side of the Viking chief, a strange conjunction of nautical styles, eight hundred years apart.

But the girl soon tired. The young Viking took her by the arm and helped her along. She didn't mind this in the least.

Finally her escort had to call on one of his men to help him, and from then on the two practically carried the poor girl between them.

Hours dragged after hours. The men began grumbling about being hungry, and about the delay. When at last they reached an encampment, Theresa was sound asleep standing up; and the moment they halted she slid to the ground completely oblivious.

The Vikings then cooked and ate and slept, and when Theresa came to her senses she was lying in a skin tent on a pile of furs. Outdoors, her companions—or captors—were busily preparing their morning meal.

The poor child was famished. Her

feet hurt her terribly. But, apart from that, she was fresh and rested.

"Hullo, folks," said she, coming to the door of her tent. "Gee, but that breakfast smells good."

"Hullo," they replied with a strange intonation to the word. Then there followed other words, which she was completely at a loss to understand.

"I don't know what you're saying," said she with an engaging smile, "but I accept your kind invitation."

Whereupon she sat down and helped herself to some of the food. Instantly the grim warriors crowded around her, and literally fell over each other in their eagerness to be of service to her.

The most eager was the boy in chain-mail, with the yellow curls and drooping yellow mustache. His helmet was off now, and he appeared even younger, not over twenty, in spite of the mustache. Terry was in her element. And yet, if she had but considered, there was no reason to believe that these Vikings as yet suspected her sex.

TWO nights—if one can call them nights, with the central sun hanging ever in the zenith—had passed since the girl had slipped over the side of the Miami, to escape from the clutches of Nick Fratelli and his accomplices.

The baffled gangster, in spite of his certainty that she had been devoured by some sea monster, had run the ship back along the shore in search of her; but, thanks to plenty of misinformation from Charley Loy, Nick had so far misjudged the time of her departure that he didn't run back anywhere near far enough.

Finally the hunt had been abandoned, the Miami had been tied to the shore, and, after another meal, the gang had all turned in for a sleep.

After breakfast, the Rat called a council of war of his cohorts, and announced his plans.

Said he: "I figure, from Eric Redmond's story, that there is some sort of town of these here Skraelings—which is what the savages are called—quite a distance south of the plateau city of the Vikings. I want those Skraelings, and I want them pronto. I have a damn' good idea that our old boss, Scarface, will team up with the Vikings, now that he finds himself without many men. We stand a good chance of getting run out of here if we don't do something quick. Scarface isn't licked yet. Too bad all you bums got lit up, the other time we skipped out on him, or we wouldn't have him to worry about now."

"I tank you make wan beeg mistake call me a boom," replied Swede Johnson. "You ain't ban Scarface Yimmy."

"No, I 'ain't ban Scarface Yimmy," retorted Fratelli; "and what's more, if you cut loose another wise-crack like that, you won't be Svede Yohnson any longer; do you get me?"

"Yah," admitted the Swede.

Nick then chained the Chinese to one of the deck rings, by means of the pair of handcuffs which had been Mike Murphy's chief contribution to events aboard the Miami. Leaving food and water within Charley's reach, Nick started inland with Cicero, Swede, Scutari and Friday, all five fully armed and rationed.

The terrain at this point was an open, parklike field, through which they pressed rapidly at right angles to the coast; until after about an hour, they struck a well-marked trail running north and south.

"Are any of youse Boy Scouts?"

inquired Nick. "Because if you are, here's your chance to figure out which way this sidewalk runs."

All examined it intently, but with no particular purpose in mind.

Then Swede announced: "I tank it run both vays."

"Of course it does, you dumb-bell," retorted Nick, exasperated.

"I tank you make wan beeg mistake call me doom-bell," said Swede calmly, but he wisely refrained from any comment about Nick's not being Scarface.

"I have it," exclaimed Cicero. "Let's toss for it. Heads we go north. Tails we go south."

He flipped a coin. Nick stooped and picked it up.

"Heads!" said he, putting the coin in his own pocket.

So they started north.

After a time they ate, then trudged on some more, then ate again.

"Time to sleep," announced their leader.

"Say, we forgot our blankets," objected Cicero.

"What do you think this is, anyway," sneered Nick, "a hotel? This is war!"

"Yeah?" asked Cicero. "Well, we had blankets in the last war I was in."

"You must have been in the Audience Department then," retorted Nick, "for there was lots of times in France when we infantry didn't have no blankets at all."

"Shut up!" exclaimed Scutari. "I hear some one coming."

American gangsters may not be woodsmen, but they can certainly take to cover like Indians the moment they sense danger.

Consequently the Viking band coming down the path saw nothing to arouse their suspicion.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.



A wailing fire siren drowned the shrilling of police whistles behind him

The Fire Test

*Caught in an impassable ring of flames, Slim Bill finds
a new meaning for the word loyalty*

By ROBERT J. PEARSALL

“YOU stand by the gang, kid,” warned Buck Devlin with portentously scowling brow. “If you do, the gang ’ll stand by you, see. If you don’t—”

A significant snap of the finger, eloquent in its promise of an early passage from this life, completed the sentence.

But in truth the commandment was an easy one for Billy to accept. All his young life he had been standing by any one whom he had once called a friend. Child of the streets as he was,

“clouds of glory” hadn’t yet ceased to trail about his boyhood; and since other forms of righteousness were rather scarce in his world, Billy had been compelled to build all his creed upon the one article of faith called loyalty.

He answered Devlin suitably enough in words; but more convincing was his expansive smile, wide, beaming, trustful and altogether trustworthy. That smile Devlin immediately recognized as an asset in his business, in which the appearance of honesty availed much.

"In a month he'll be as fly as they make 'em," said the man who had brought him in, having been impressed with Bill's cleverness at craps and certain other tricks, ruses and camouflage of the pavements, which the necessity of self-preservation had forced Billy to learn.

Devlin shot his cold, clever eyes into the boy's shrewd ones, carefully studied the young-old, freckled, wise face, and decided the man might be right.

So Billy, who was then fourteen and had been on his own since he was ten, was taken into Devlin's organization, which at that time controlled much of the city's politics and most of its underworld life.

During the next four years Billy learned many things well, not the least of which was the principle that anything easy and profitable is right, provided it is sufficiently safe.

As a lookout he acquired an uncanny, intuitive ability to recognize any one connected with the police; as a runner he became acquainted with most of the *habitués* of the fascinating, shadowy district north of Portsmouth Square, and learned to carry cryptic, unintelligible messages without changing a syllable.

Imperceptibly he changed from "Billy" to "Slim Bill," a clean-cut youth of strength, courage, resolution, and utter fidelity to the gang, upon which hard times had descended with the reform administration.

A government padlock ornamented the door of Devlin's speakeasy; drunkenness and chloral hydrate could no longer be turned to profitable account; and even Devlin's lottery was closed by the new, freak ideas of the police.

However, men must eat; and salvation came from the branches which the

banks were opening everywhere. Not like the great down town strongholds were these, but corner buildings hardly more imposing than cigar stores, with no more than two or three employees—and sometimes, during the noon hour, only one—to guard great stacks of currency.

ONE night, when fog lay over the city like a cloak, the remaining members of the depleted gang were gathered in a certain deadfall south of Market Street. A nervous gang it was, and on Devlin's full, rather handsome broken-nosed face was a hunted, eager look. There was something that needed doing, and after delivering certain directions, Devlin went with Bill to the door.

"Now, you've got everything straight?"

"I've got it, all right." Bill flashed the ghost of his old smile on Devlin.

"Now, don't make no bull. But you hadn't ought to have any trouble. The dicks won't be lookin' for you. You didn't have anything to do with the job—that's why I'm sendin' you. Remember, three flights up and turn to your left, and the satchel's under loose boards at the head of the bed. Fifty thousand bucks in it. Be careful."

He gave Bill an anxious look.

"Now hustle."

Bill wasted no time in starting. Devlin watched him disappear down the blurred street, then drew the door shut behind him. The light which the door had emitted was cut off, leaving only the blank, unpainted board wall, with the mist swirling against it and dropping down.

Reaching Howard Street, Bill turned to the right. Ahead of him was the down town section, flooded with yellowish lights, beyond which the

ferry building pointed upward like a dully illuminated monstrous needle. But on Third Street, where he presently arrived, there were few open shops; and the light from these, discouraged looking restaurants and pawnshops, hardly thrust back the curtain of night.

The fog was so thick that what few loiterers there were seemed to be waiting in ambush. The hurrying figures loomed up suddenly and then were gone like specters—except one, which, after a sharp glance at Bill, turned and followed him.

Nothing conveyed a warning to Bill, however; and presently he passed into an even more desolate street, where the ramshackle buildings seemed to have jostled each other to the point of tumbling, and there were no other passers-by at all.

Here Bill's trailer lengthened his stride, putting his feet down at the same instant as did Bill, and so creeping on him unseen. And in the middle of a block, with a swift, noiseless rush, he thrust the muzzle of a heavy revolver against Bill's spine.

"I've gotcha! Hands up, now."

At first Bill thought one of his own tribe had got him—unspeakable treachery! But a glance at the muscular, heavy-set, middle-aged man undeceived him. Detective Harker had him, a plain-clothes dick, and one of the most hard-boiled of them all. Bill simultaneously cringed and tensed his muscles; no telling what was to happen.

"You've got me, all right. What's up?"

"We'll see what's up."

THE search was intimate and thorough, but it revealed nothing except a cheap watch and a few silver coins.

"My mistake. Should 've waited till the split. But we're takin' a trip in."

The detective's hand was heavy on Bill's arm.

"What for?" asked Bill.

"The Fillmore Street bank robbery, of course," but the detective made no move to execute his threat.

"I'm clean on that, and you know it."

"Maybe," said Harker heavily. "Maybe! We'll let Captain Maxon find out." Then his voice changed to a friendlier note. "Say, Bill, you'd better cough up."

"What yer mean—cough up?"

"You know. Everything. You're runnin' with a smooth gang, all right, but we're goin' to get 'em, and get you, too. And on this Fillmore Street robbery, too—somebody's goin' to swing for that."

"Swing!" Bill's voice had a hollow note. "Did—did the teller die?"

"An hour ago. Now, Bill, listen here. We ain't got anything on you—not anything we can't forget. There were three in on that holdup. A thousand dollars each is the standin' reward—that makes three thousand. Now you and me—I ain't takin' you in as a prisoner. I'm takin' you in as a man that won't stand for murder, and is willin' to tell all he knows. Fifty-fifty on the reward—fifteen hundred for you."

"You go to hell! I know you was a damn stool pigeon yourself before you—"

"Damn you!"

The big detective struck fiercely. Bill knew the blow was coming—thereby would Harker gain merit for a difficult catch, and Bill a charge of resistance that would hold him for a while. He took the heavy blow with only a slight withdrawal, being thus

enabled to slash down and dash Harker's revolver to the ground.

Dizzied and shaken, he was around and away like a jungle creature—which he was, in a sense.

Down an alley, over a fence—and thank the bay for the shielding fog that was pouring in. Thank also accident or some pyromaniac for the fire that had started somewhere, so that a jangling bell and a wailing siren drowned the police whistle behind.

South on Fourth Street straight toward the sound he ran.

"That fire's where I'm livin'," he cried fiercely to a dark form that rose in his path. Through another alley now, doubling back, and under the platform of a warehouse. Tense, trying to still his gasping breathing, and thinking—thinking!

So the bank teller had died. Gee, that was tough! Bill had a limited vocabulary even in his thinking processes.

The bird hadn't ought to have resisted, Devlin would say. And Bill was probably a weak sister, for the sickness that was gradually coming over him.

But the whole game wasn't what it used to be—the gang was tougher—and Bill, though he didn't know it, was somehow growing up inside to the promise of his clean-cut features.

Sometimes he'd like to ditch it all—but what a laugh Devlin would get out of his thinking the police would let him settle down on a regular job unless he squealed! And who'd trust him like the gang trusted him? Take to-night—fifty thousand dollars!

Gee! Yes, he'd have to be square to a gang like that.

But how wonderful it would be if he could be square without dodging people—as, for instance, the members

of that fire crew who had gone careening past.

PRESENTLY he crept out of his hiding place and followed the engine. He didn't realize he was following it, nor what that might mean, until right ahead he saw the glare of fire through the fog, and heard the quick pant of engines and sounds of a crowd. Then he quickened his pace and stopped, aghast, on the next corner, where the police were already forming their lines.

Ahead of him, across the street, were two burning buildings. A great twelve-story loft building was blazing on two floors; and an adjacent six-story tenement was aflame in its first story. Half dressed people were standing about, and a fireman was carrying an unconscious woman down the tenement stairway between the two structures.

In that burning tenement, where one of the gang quartered, was the satchel which Devlin and his two companions, hard pressed after the robbery, had temporarily cached there. Fifty thousand in coin and bills was in that satchel, and Bill had been sent to get it.

Glancing about, he saw Captain Maxon's eyes upon him. Chills went down his spine. Captain Maxon was the officer covering the robbery—a hard-as-nails dick, a "third degree" artist. But Maxon glanced indifferently away, and Bill decided that his presence was an accident.

Then Bill thought he saw his chance, and went over the rope like a pole vaulter. Crying out something about "my wife," he dodged under the extended arm of a fireman and crossed the street at a bound.

The police were behind him now, but there was so much confusion, he hoped

none of them had recognized him. Up the tenement steps he ran, into the hallway and up a flight of stairs. As he reached the top a tongue of flame flicked across the doorway. Smoke began to pour up at him.

Rushing through the door, he slammed it shut. As he did so it came to him with a rush why the firemen had abandoned the building as soon as they had taken out its occupants.

The factory next door was the West Coast Film Company. Its second floor was used as a storeroom for films. The rickety tenement was tinder, anyway; and in a minute or two the exploding films would turn both buildings into an inferno.

However, there might still be time to get the satchel and retreat down the rear fire escape. That would be Bill's only chance, for the dart of fire across the foot of the front stairway showed that way was already cut off.

Up two flights of stairs Bill pounded, turned to the left as Devlin had directed, and used a key. In perhaps a minute more he had retrieved the heavy, precious satchel from its hiding place.

Even in that short time the blaze had turned into a terrifying one. The films were exploding like a spouting volcano; and it was through furnace-like heat, stinging smoke and deadly fumes that Bill ran along the hall toward the fire escape at the rear.

But now, with the weight of the satchel dragging at him, Bill's chief fear was of capture; and he remembered with relief that the fire escape opened on a narrow alley, where there would likely be no police lines.

His hand was on the rear door. Through broken glass of a window he saw smoke pouring up outside. A minute or so more and it would have been

too late, but as yet the smoke was unlit by flames, and he felt his escape assured.

He pulled the door open, just as a blast from the factory rocked the frail tenement to its foundation. Shaken, terrified, but keeping his head, Bill paused to knot his coat through the handle of the satchel, so he could use both hands for climbing if he had to; and had one foot on the fire escape when suddenly he stopped.

The noise of the blast had subsided; and through the roaring of the flames, the throbbing of engines and the pounding rush of water, there came from somewhere above in the tenement a thin, loud wail that palsied Bill with the most horrible fear he had ever known in his life.

"Ma-ma! Da-da! Ma-ma!" It was a child shrieking.

DOWN on the street two policemen were holding the woman who had been carried from the building in a faint, and who was now fighting to enter it again and clamoring for her baby in a foreign tongue. At a little distance the hard-boiled Police Captain Maxon was talking to the deputy fire chief.

"That's the end of Slim Bill," he said, not altogether with satisfaction.

"He had nerve, anyway," replied the fire chief. "A lotta nerve for a crook."

"Yeah! Fact is, we didn't have much on him till to-night. That's why I didn't pinch him when he showed up. That, and because he used to sell papers on my beat when I was a flatfoot. But, of course, if he did beat it out with that satchelful of washers, with Confederate bills on top, he'd go up for ten years at least, as accessory after the fact to that robbery."

"H-m! I suppose he was sent for the money because the gang knew he'd go through for them. And he sure tried to. I wish— What's that?" to a ladderman who had just rushed up.

"There's a woman back there—we've just found out what she's yellin' about—her baby's up there somewhere. Fifth floor, if we got her right. Can't understand very well."

"Goshamighty! Get busy there." The deputy burst into a flurry of activity. "Ladder crew three! Behind the building. Hey, you! Take that hose back there, too. There may be a chance—"

But a moment later came another explosion at the rear of the factory, scattering blazing films and embers into the already superheated air. When the ladders were taken to the alley and dropped against the tenement, their upper ends projected into an impassable wall of flame.

"Take 'em down again. Might as well crawl into a furnace."

MEANWHILE Bill had retreated from floor to floor. As fast as he climbed, it seemed the flames followed him. The satchel encumbered him, and so he dropped it. All he carried now, and all he cared for, was in a blanket resting on his shoulders, with its ends knotted in front.

He was on the top floor now. Smoke and flame were spitting through every broken window, even through cracks in the floor.

Desperately he looked around. Through blinding tears he saw another door; and he ran through it, slammed it shut, and raced up the narrow stairway to the flat roof of the tenement.

He searched the roof with his eyes. A scaling ladder—a rope—anything!

Though the fire was racing up all sides of the tenement, there must be a chance—there must be—to save his precious burden.

Smoke enveloped him; he could not be seen from below. He ran to the edge of the roof and shrieked, but though the cry was heard below, no one could locate him. He turned around, and a swirl in the smoke revealed a clothesline with charred garments dangling from it.

He leaped at it, tore it down, and raced around the edge of the roof. But wherever he looked, sheets of flame warned him; the thin clothesline would go like paper, and death waited on the pavements below.

Every now and then a wailing cry from the bundle on his back spurred him. It sounded as he stopped again on the side of the tenement next the factory. Hope had died in him, but he set his jaw at the cry, and measured with his eyes the leap to the nearest window.

Swiftly doubling the clothesline and shoving it inside his shirt, he backed away, and, taking a short run, leaped off into space.

He was missing the window—no, he was going through it! Glass crashed, the window frame flung him back.

Then he was clinging to the bottom of the sill with blood starting from his fingers. Smoke, heat and poisonous gases were weakening him fast, but he managed to elbow his way up and project himself into the bare loft of the factory.

He stood, bleeding from a score of cuts, staring through the murky gloom of the loft. There was the stairway, but below was a reddish gleam—no hope there.

Up the other wooden stairway he ran, driven by panic, like a hunted ani-

mal. Up and up, until at last he came out on the flat roof.

Here the air was clearer, and he stopped, drawing the freshness of it into his tortured lungs. The heat was great, but not unendurable, being dispelled a little by the wet fog from the bay.

Panic subsided, and then another came upon him—not for a long time had there been even a whimper from the bundle on his back. Stretching his arm around, he fumbled with a quivering hand at the blanket folds. He felt the labored breathing of the little body and almost cried with weakness and relief.

"Poor little thing! Maybe if I give it more air—"

Very carefully he worked at the blanket, uncovering the tiny face, but not too much.

Then he began to circle this roof as he had the smaller one. Faster and faster he moved, as the false, unreasonable hope which the momentary reaction had given him died away. The factory was ringed with flame, spouting from all its lower stories. The packages of films were burning with the force of a myriad explosions. Searing heat and strangling fumes shot far out; and in fear of them all ladders had been withdrawn.

Bill began to leap up and down, waving his hands, shouting at the pygmy people below. His cries were lost in the great roar of the fire, but some of them, looking up, saw him.

OATHS and prayers began to arise. The crowd outside the fire lines swayed, stirred, flung up a hundred hands, and poured entreaties, oaths and threats upon the heads of the helpless firemen. The news spread as to what the doomed

man's bundle probably contained and the frenzy increased.

Maxon stirred restlessly. "D'ye suppose it's true? Or is it the satchel? Can't you do something, chief?"

"They're gettin' ready to shoot a line now, but before they can get it placed—I swear I never saw fire work so fast."

"If it's the kid— But no, it must be the satchel. Like him! He was sent to get it, and he's holdin' on," said the policeman.

"Like him, eh! Well, even if it's only that, I wish I had that youngster. It's men like him—"

The deputy's involuntary groan was echoed from hundreds of throats. The factory was fairly rocked by the greatest explosion yet, as the fire reached a store of chemicals in a loft. Whole sections of the wall were blown out, and flying bricks nearly reached the police lines behind which the crowd was packed. One end of the metal roof seemed to erupt.

"He's gone! He's gone!"

"No, he ain't. There he is!"

"Oh-h! He's done for."

Bill had been flung from his feet. With an oath he leaped up, then flung his arms behind him, arching them over his tender burden to protect it from falling debris. None came except sparks and flying brands from the hole that had been opened in the roof. The wind carried them to him; he brushed them off, and then shrank back, appalled at the same horror that had torn the hearts of all the crowd.

Through the hole in the roof a solid column of fire shot skyward a hundred feet. The hole was the flue that the fire had lacked. The giant streamer towered, then faltered, then came again.

And as the pressure of air from within the building lessened, the rising wind caught it and bent it slowly over to sweep the roof.

That was what the crowd was witnessing. They saw Bill retreat, hands shielding face, walking backward to spare his shoulder-borne burden what heat he could. Then they saw him stop, rush back to the chimney in the middle of the roof, pick up something, and again back away until they thought he was going over the low parapet.

But he didn't. He stooped.

"What's he doin'?"

"Maybe goin' to jump."

"No, he ain't. Fastenin' somethin' to the parapet."

"No matter if he had a line that 'd reach to the moon, he couldn't get down."

"Jee-rusalem! I bet he's scorchin'."

Bill *was* scorching. Every inch of him was a separate agony. He could never have endured it for himself. Not for the slender chance of escape he had.

He would have backed, backed away from the raging torture, backed to the coolness that he would find at the end of the plunge to the ground.

But that wouldn't be square to the kid. The kid! After he had picked it up, dandled it, and it had gurgled at him. Grinned and squeezed his finger, it had!

Game as they make 'em, it had stopped crying, but he wished he could hear it crying now.

Hurry, now, hurry, for the wind was rising, the flames were strengthening, and one breath of them would be fatal.

Hurry, and yet make a safe twist, too, in the stout wire he had thrust

through the water runway and bent around the parapet.

Now for it!

FROM the crowd came a sobbing gasp, then a great cry. First they thought he had dropped, but he checked himself and slid down the short wire. To the end of the wire the doubled clothesline was knotted, and hand over hand Bill went down, until the loop he had tied at the end of it tightened about his chest.

The air seemed oxygenless, deadly. Windows on both sides of him poured out stifling smoke and hungry-seeming flames. But the licking, fiery tongues couldn't reach him.

Bill and his burden were better off there than on the fire swept lid of the oven the building had become. Again he reached back, felt of the blanket folds, then went suddenly limp.

Through senses mercifully growing dull, Bill heard faintly the great shout from below. A thought that he knew was somehow humorous slowly formed itself.

"Why, that crowd's cheerin' me!"

Then he struggled slightly but did not know it, and again hung quiet, two hundred feet above the crowd and the suddenly violent deputy fire chief.

"Turn in a four-alarm call. Get every blasted fireman in San Francisco workin'. Never mind the gun—no use now—sluice down that wall as high as you can pump. We'll get that fellow down or frizzle ourselves."

"But—but—" stammered Police Captain Maxon, "he hasn't got a chance, has he?"

"A chance? I dunno. But he's done the one thing that may save him. The upper lofts are empty, the superintendent told me. It's just the wood-work that's bein' gutted out now. And

that brick wall's pretty thick. If the rope don't burn through, if the heat don't kill him, if the wind would change, if there ain't another explosion—oh, damn this waitin'!"

And the deputy chief rushed out himself to seize a scaling ladder.

But it was a long time before he or any one else could use one. An hour passed, while every hose that could be brought to bear was spraying the huge building.

The firemen desperately fought their way from gutted, smoldering floor to floor, and it seemed that half the city gathered to watch, in tense silence born of the agony of waiting, the dangling, motionless body of the man who had been a thief, and that redeeming bundle on his shoulder.

Three firemen appeared at last on the roof. In the hands of one of them was a coil of rope. Swiftly they made the splice, untwisted the wire, and lowered the smoke-encrusted figure. Another terrible wait—then a word was passed to the crowd, taken up at once by a dozen mouths, and multiplied in a minute by a thousand.

"Alive! Alive! Both alive!"

There was a little cheer—not much of a cheer. Most men do not cheer when Death releases his clutch on a friend.

IT was next day. In the hospital, Bill had been restored to consciousness and even to physical comfort; but alongside the glaring newspaper headlines which proclaimed him a hero were others that brought him loneliness and even, in a sense, remorse. For he read that early that morning the deadfall south of Market had been raided, all members of the gang arrested, and the bank robbery fixed on

three of them by certain evidence, including that of a weak fellow crook, "Whitey" Smith.

"The damn' snitch! The stool!" grunted Bill. "But I ain't much better, turnin' that satchel loose—I might 've tried to bring it out and the kid, too. Course they'd have got me, but I might 've tried."

Then he read farther and discovered that the tenement had been searched the day before; the satchel had been discovered, the loot removed and iron washers and Confederate money substituted for it. The police had almost despaired of any one's calling for that satchel. Buck Devlin had admitted being afraid to go himself, but instead sent "a feller that, even if he was caught, you cops couldn't make him squeal."

Bill felt a certain pride in that—after all, he'd been square to the last. Then he saw the other angle of it. And an old question that he had long kept penned in the background of his mind, came boldly forth—how hard it is to be square to those who are square to no one else!

Not yet had he read the account of the fire and his own deed. Now, being human, he shifted his eyes to it, but they were still dull with loneliness and loss. They remained dull through a column of praise; but at the final paragraph began a slow brightening, as if he began to realize the new world ahead, one of a larger loyalty:

It is said that the young hero is to be offered a special appointment in the Fire Department by Deputy Chief Jackson, who, in reply to the suggestion that Devlin is under age, is quoted as offering to swear to the proper birth certificate himself, if necessary. In this, Police Captain Maxon joins him.



"So long, folks," Halsey called as he stepped into the coffin

John Solomon's Biggest Game

*While ruthless intrigues shake Europe's governments, two Americans
comb the mysterious and glamorous underworld
of Paris for a kidnaped girl*

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

Author of "Cyrano," "The Mysterious John Solomon," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

SIGNOR DOMINETTI, unscrupulous guiding genius of a vast organization of international crooks, has clashed many times with the mysterious cockney, John Solomon, whose power and organization are equally secret and incalculable. But now Dominetti has struck, bomb-

ing and sniping Solomon's headquarters in all Europe's capitals, and killing his agents in various "accidents." Solomon, man of Oriental mystery and cockney humor, marshals his forces against Dominetti's plot to conquer Red Russia and put the crooked Grand Duke Basil on the throne. Solomon

This story began in the Argosy for February 15.

gets Fascist Italy to back another claimant, Sergei Romanoff.

June Tully, *en route* to Solomon with formulas of a mysterious destructive ray invented by an American professor, is kidnaped by a Dominetti agent, Frank Halsey, who also robs a Chinese statesman, Dr. Lee.

A young ex-diplomat, James Warden, rescues June from Dominetti, but she is recaptured. Warden reaches Solomon in Paris, with a copy of the formula; and the cockney sends his right-hand man, Dick North, with Warden to her rescue. She is being held in a Dominetti retreat in the suburbs.

CHAPTER VII.

"FOLLOW THAT CAR!"

"DO you know where Dominetti's villa is located?" asked Warden, as the Hispano wound through the Paris traffic and struck into Rue St. Honoré. North nodded.

"Yes. I want to take you past the laboratory on the way. I think we'd better separate. I'll leave you the car and establish myself at some place in Boulogne. We can meet each morning at a certain time; we'll see. Got any notions of your own?"

"Nary a notion," said Warden cheerfully. "If you and I are in charge of this particular business, go ahead and line things up as seems best to you."

"I don't savvy our friend John a bit," returned North thoughtfully. "Why is he going out of town now, of all times? Why is he putting us on this sort of errand? Take it from me, feller, this Solomon knows a lot more than he says, and he plans ahead pretty well. I've heard that he actually fore-

tells the future and makes his plans accordingly—which is all rot. But we'll see on the way out."

Ahmed nodded back in response to North's instructions, and bowled along by way of the Trocadero and Passy, presently turning into Avenue Mozart and sweeping down the Auteuil hill to the Metro station at Rue Jasmin. He turned off upon this short and newly built-up little street, and slowed to a crawling pace.

"There you are."

North pointed ahead to a building on the left. It was a most peculiar structure—two-storied, and massively built of stone, apparently with no windows on the ground floor. Located on a corner, it was built out to the sidewalk and gave an impression of being a solid stone block. Behind was a walled garden.

As they turned and went down the side street to the avenue again, Warden noticed that the one door in the building seemed to be made of heavy brass. A carriage entrance broke the wall of the garden and was closed by massive and unpierced gates.

"It was in this street that the arm was found?" asked Warden.

North nodded silently.

The car whirled on to the Auteuil gate, halted for gasoline check at the barrier, and went on out toward Boulogne. Warden was by no means unfamiliar with Paris, and knew that this once elegant residential suburb had of late years become more and more occupied by huge factories, so that now its old beauty was gone. Its streets and grog-shops had been invaded by Algerian and other foreign workmen; it was now a hotbed of communism.

They turned into Boulevard Jean Jaurés, and after a couple of blocks Ahmed slowed down.

"There's the place, on the right," said North. "The high wall with the house at the right end. It's a splendid old villa, I understand, though like all the rest of these places, it doesn't look up to much."

Nor did it. In common with most of the street, this house was largely blank wall, the lower windows protected by heavy iron grillework. To the left of the house extended a garden wall, broken only by gates, which stood open at the moment, giving a glimpse of a garden with trees and fountains, and a huge Mercedes car standing ready to leave.

Then they were past. Ahmed went on to the corner of the Avenue de la Reine and halted. North indicated a café terrace across the street.

"Let's drop over and have a drink. Good place."

They walked over to the café and settled down at a table, the terrace being unoccupied at the time. After a waiter had taken their order, North lighted a cigarette and spoke.

"Warden, I haven't a ghost of a notion what to do—we'll simply have to see what turns up, and act accordingly. To break into the house and take Miss Tully away is out of the question. For one thing, French law is pretty liberal. Get into a man's place, or into his garden, and he can pump you full of lead—and usually will do it, too. Besides, don't forget this point: we're by no means sure that Miss Tully wants to be set free."

"**H**UH?" Warden stared at him, startled by the implication of these words. "What are you driving at?"

North shrugged. "She's no helpless jointed doll, is she? To be honest, I'm not sure just what I am driving at, but

I know one thing—John Solomon never tells anybody just what's in his head. Don't be surprised at anything that turns up. For all we know, he may have been in communication with Miss Tully already. I do know that when he goes out of town, he usually expects hell to pop. But don't think he's running away. When the popping is going on, he'll show up in the middle of it."

Warden sniffed skeptically. "It's all mud to me, anyhow. We don't know what's going on, we don't know what to do—"

"I'll tell you what to do. Follow a hunch, every time!" said North. "We play hunches in this game, mister! Near as I can figure the thing out, Solomon gets the best men he can find, then expects them to use their heads. He backs 'em up to the finish, but he never has any strings on 'em."

"What about his organization getting smashed?" demanded Warden.

"Mistakes. You heard him. We can't make mistakes, that's all. Got a gun?"

Warden shook his head.

"You'll find one in the right-hand door pocket of the car, with a couple extra clips of cartridges. Carry it and use it."

North was suddenly crisp, concise, authoritative, as though he had settled on a scheme of action. And so he had, as his next words evinced.

"Now, I'll go to a little hotel around the corner and get me a room, savvy? I'm pretty well all in—didn't sleep any too much last night, and I've been on the go. So I'll rest up. At ten in the morning and five in the afternoon I'll be sitting right here over an *apéritif*, and if you get wise to anything or need me, show up."

"And meantime?"

"Follow your nose," North grinned, lifting his glass. "Here's luck!"

Warden drained his glass and rose. "Then I'm off."

"Eh?" North's brows lifted. "Just like that?"

"You bet. No use having a perfectly good car and chauffeur loafing on the job—and I just happened to remember the car standing at the villa. Can this Ahmed do the chase act?"

"Try him. I never found any of Solomon's Arabs who couldn't do what was wanted in a pinch. Go along, then, and here's hoping you have luck! But I doubt it."

Warden nodded and strode off to the car. Ahmed ben Zain swung down, and as he held the door open Warden addressed him.

"Do you speak English? No?" He switched to French. "Well, you recall the villa we passed around the corner, where a car was standing ready to leave? Drive back that way. If the car's still there, pull up in front of a shop."

"*Oui, m'sieur.*" Ahmed replied.

The car hummed into life. Warden waved a hand at North and a moment later was returning along the main thoroughfare of Boulogne. A glance at the villa showed the gates still open, the car still there, a chauffeur at the wheel. Only a matter of moments, then, if the driver was ready to depart.

Ahmed turned in at the curb, and Warden, leaving the car, stepped into a plumbing shop and passed the time of day very frankly with the proprietor.

"I AM an American, *m'sieur*, unacquainted in the neighborhood.

Perhaps you would know of any private hotel which I might lease, near by—a place something like that very

comfortable-looking villa across the street. Eh?"

The plumber shoved his mustaches out of the way and responded genially enough:

"Alas, *m'sieur*, I am desolated! Only three days ago I heard of a very good villa just beyond the church, but now it is gone. It is difficult to secure a house at this season, *m'sieur*. That one across the street belongs to M. Hamelet, and is leased by an Italian prince. Perhaps, if I hear of anything—"

Warden laid down a ten-franc note and a card, on which he wrote a fictitious name and address. At least, the plumber would not lose anything. A warning honk of Ahmed's horn came to him, and, shaking hands in the cordial French manner, he left the plumber and returned to the car. The big Mercedes which he had spotted was just coming out of the villa gates and was turning in the direction of the church.

"Follow that car!" said Warden as he hopped in.

The Mercedes swung past, but another car intervened, and Warden could not see whether it was occupied or not. Looking back, he saw the gates of the villa being closed by two men, and realized that Dominetti must have servants in plenty. Then Ahmed was off, tooling the Hispano into an ever-increasing speed.

Past the church, on into the Bois, sweeping through the pleasant, endless vistas of trees and water at sixty miles an hour. Then in at the Porte Dauphine and on to the Etoile.

Warden had completely lost sight of the car ahead, but Ahmed never faltered, and swept down the Champs Elysées to the Rond Point. A sudden swerving turn, and Warden saw the

Mercedes ahead, rounding into Avenue Gabriel.

Ahmed slowed down and spoke back through the open window.

"The Marché aux Timbres, *m'sieur*. He is getting out."

"Good," said Warden. "You know the Café Marigny, just down the street? Wait near there."

The Mercedes had, indeed, turned in at the curb, and from the car was stepping none other than the agent, Frank Halsey. Here at the corner of Avenue Marigny was the only place in Paris where unlicensed peddlers could concentrate freely—the Stamp Market, where a corner beside the Theater Marigny and the puppet-shows of children's delight was given up to the national indoor pastime of Frenchmen—the collecting of stamps.

Here, in the outdoors, beneath the widespreading trees, the king of hobbies held sway twice a week, rain or shine. The ground was lined with rows of tables and portable booths where postage stamps were displayed; other peddlers, usually with valuable wares in pocket containers, circulated among the throng. Two out of three of these merchants were foreigners; a large percentage were Armenians, or Russians, who had seized upon this form of business since the war days.

Between sidewalk and street moved the crowd. Here little iron chairs were rented, the booths being confined to the space inside the sidewalk, and men sat by the hour, chatting or putting over deals. Some were of magnitude, also—the largest philatelic dealers in France circulated here, either personally or through agents. To this point also came clerks with the envelopes of their firms' foreign mail, heirs and boys and women with stamp collections to sell, people who had turned up old letters.

The crowd was fascinating enough. A fair proportion were boys, but the majority were men of all ages—distinguished old characters with ribbons at their lapels, younger men who stole an hour from the office, even some women. The Café Marigny, a block distant, catered with eagerness to this trade, and on market days was always crowded to capacity by the overflow from the stamp bourse.

WARDEN, moving through the throng, presently picked up his man. He was curious to see what business Halsey would have here, for such a type would certainly not be a collector of stamps and would not be interested in the small profits of such a business. He was confident that he himself was unknown to Halsey, except by description, so he had no hesitation in trailing his quarry closely.

It was soon apparent, in fact, that Halsey had no interest in postage stamps. This tall, distinguished looking man with piercing dark eyes and aristocratic features, was obviously an American, and was eagerly approached by vendors. He waved them all aside, passed curiously but negligently among the booths and tables, and appeared to be sauntering around to kill an idle hour.

Warden, whose French tailored clothes were less readily marked, was scarcely bothered by the ambulant peddlers.

Strolling along in the tightly packed crowd as closely as he dared behind Halsey, Jimmy Warden observed his quarry halt abruptly before a little booth, presided over by an ancient crone whose straggling gray locks and hard-bitten face were at singular contrast with her occupation. She was, at the moment, engaged in making a

ten-centime deal with a pair of school-boys, but Warden saw her flash a look at Halsey, and fancied recognition in it.

Mr. Halsey began to study her wares with evidences of absorbed interest. Mr. Warden, moving up close by, took one of the beldame's smaller albums and turned the pages slowly, examining a stamp here, another there, laying aside a few as he went on.

The old woman dismissed the boys and turned to Halsey and Warden. For a moment she stood jotting down the price of the stamps selected by the latter. Presently Halsey spoke to her, in English.

"Tell Victor I'm bringing a client to-night at seven."

The old crone flung him a leer—a knowing, significant glance.

"Good," she said. "We have moved since you were here last, *mon ami*. Fifty-six Rue Jacob. Is it the old game?"

Halsey laughed. "The same," he said. "But be careful. Wait for the *liqueurs*."

"Naturally," she returned. "Victor is at the café now, if you want to see him."

Halsey nodded and moved away.

Warden closed the album, took the envelope of stamps he had selected and paid for them. He edged his way out of the throng, caring nothing further about trailing Halsey. He had learned what he was seeking, and a good deal more than he had expected. And yet—there was the man Victor! Halsey would go to the Café Marigny, beyond a doubt.

Jimmy Warden chuckled to himself as he made his way across the street and started down the wide sidewalk under the great trees. Luck was breaking his way, for once.

Halsey had been in Paris before this trip, obviously, and knew the old crone and her precious Victor. He was on his own errands this morning, not those of Dominetti. And Solomon had said that Halsey was "sweet" on June Tully. Therefore, whatever this place in Rue Jacob might be, it was a fair gamble that the "client" Halsey was taking there that night, was none other than June Tully herself.

"It's a good chance, anyhow," thought Jimmy Warden cheerfully. "And if I were to meet friend Halsey all alone in the dark—that would be just too bad!"

WARDEN saw Ahmed ben Zain with the car at the curb, but passed him with a brief nod and turned in at the café, already largely filled with patrons, books of stamps, catalogues. Warden took a corner table whence he could command a view of the place, then settled down over a Rossi.

He had plenty of business of his own to keep him engaged until evening. Whether Yusuf had taken care of his grips from Le Havre, he did not know; in any event, they would be safe enough. However, he had only the clothes he stood in, and this meant making purchases. Solomon's house was closed to him, evidently, so the best plan would be to get a hotel room for the night, if he needed it. And there was North to be met at five o'clock, too.

Presently Halsey strode into sight, entered the café and went to a swarthy man who sat behind some albums at a center table. This man, disfigured by a large red scar across the mouth, rose and shook hands in surprised recognition.

Halsey sat down, and they fell into

talk, low-voiced, eager. Halsey produced a wallet and counted out some yellow hundred-franc notes.

Having secured all he could hope for, Warden paid his score and left. He went to the car, and as he slammed the door the Hispano rolled away. Ahmed knew his business.

"See anything of the Mercedes?" asked Warden.

"No, *m'sieur*. It went away."

"All right. Go down Rue Jacob and let's take a look at number fifty-six. Then we'll think about lunch—getting on to noon."

Ahmed struck across the Alexandre III bridge to the left bank and swept up along the quays. Rue Jacob was a short, famous little street between St. Germain and the Beaux Arts—a dingy abode of publishers, booksellers, cafés.

Watching the numbers narrowly, Warden was astonished to find that fifty-six was one of those bizarre places which catered to the night life of the quarter. "The Abode of Bad Spirits" was its ironic name; the windows and doors were decorated to represent the fires of hell. It was closed at the moment, and probably would not open until the evening.

"Place St. Michel and luncheon," Warden said to his driver. "Then we'll do some errands and get back to meet M. North at five."

During luncheon Warden determined to stake everything on his conjecture that the "client" to whom Halsey had referred was June Tully, and that Halsey was bringing her to the Abode of Bad Spirits that evening. Why? No answer. How could she be brought if she were a prisoner? No answer again.

However, there was something in the air. Warden had a hunch, and meant to play it hard.

In the course of the afternoon he replaced necessary toilet articles and a few clothes, did an errand or two, wrote a letter at the bank, and obtained a room at the Hôtel Vignon behind the Madeleine.

Following the obvious example of North, he resolutely shut Solomon out of his mind—clearly enough, they must temporarily discount any assistance from the little cockney. He tried to pick up information regarding the Abode of Bad Spirits, but could learn nothing of any consequence about the place—it was one of a hundred tourist traps.

At five o'clock Warden was sitting on the terrace of the little café in Boulogne, when North came striding up and plumped down at the adjoining table.

"Well, how's everything?" Warden inquired.

"Mad. Utterly mad and impossible and restful." North laughed. "I've slept up and feel fit as a fiddle—with nothing to do. Tried to reach John, but the phone wouldn't answer—he's kept his word and shut up shop. How about you?"

"Oh, I've been on the jump all day," and Warden recounted his experiences. Two elderly Frenchmen were the only persons in sight, so talking seemed safe enough. After he had finished, North made shrewd comment.

"This bird Halsey is pulling something on his own hook, feller, and you've stumbled on to it fine. I have a man at Le Bourget, and I've wired London; Dominetti is still there. I imagine Halsey and that chap Glazunoff are running things here for Dominetti. This cabaret is not so good—I've heard of it once or twice. Suppose I show up there alone around seven or eight to-night, eh? I'm known

to Dominetti's crowd, of course, but I don't think any one is trailing me; still, we'll play safe and keep separate. Then they'll be watching me and not you. By the way, you should have a lady to make you look like an innocent tourist."

"I hope to have one before the evening's over," said Warden grimly.

"Nope; I know a better trick than that."

North took out pencil and paper, jotted down a name and address. He signed his name, drew the Seal of Solomon beneath, and gave the paper to Warden.

"Sophie Haller—she has a perfume shop in Boulevard Haussman near the Galeries Lafayette. She's one of our outfit, and can take care of herself in a fracas. Go to Sophie. Tell her you want her to go to dinner with you. She's good company. If there's any fuss, I'll take her off your hands and leave you free to act."

Warden assented, and five minutes later was on his way to the Boulevard Haussman.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ABODE OF BAD SPIRITS.

A FEW minutes past seven saw Jimmy Warden and his companion, a vivacious lady of thirty-odd, with false blond hair and a steely eye, seated in the Abode of Bad Spirits, giving a very good imitation of a tourist and his Parisian sweetheart.

The aspect of the place had changed with evening. Like many such resorts, the general note of the interior was rather cheap at first sight. The door attendant and waiters were all masked green devils, of small size—

none of them over five feet in height. There was a narrow central dining floor running down to a dancing space, where an orchestra of six green devils made weird but rhythmic music. On either hand were semiprivate booths, each of which was emblazoned with the name of a fallen angel in glaring red neon tubes, and the curtains to each booth were decorated with the likeness of a bad spirit rising from the flames of hell.

Walls and ceiling carried out the analogy in a riot of colors, while the lights, of a vivid and uncompromising green, gave the whole place a rather ghastly appearance.

At the far end, to the right of the orchestra, was a large statue of a scarlet and grinning Mephisto, pointing with mute invitation to a large doorway whose curtains bore the title "*L'Enfer*"—Hell.

In small details, calculated to impress tourists, the general idea was carried farther still. Salt and pepper shakers were in the figures of devils; the plates and china were decorated with crudely obscene shapes; each table bore candles set in skull-and-crossbones holders, and so forth.

What really gave the place its convincing touch of grotesque and bizarre oddity was the small size of the waiters, who scurried about, made odd squeaking noises as they spoke, and conducted themselves like spoiled children. These masked and horned little green figures were, as Sophie Haller murmured to Warden, abnormal products of the slums of Paris, though two or three were jockeys who eked out a living in this fashion.

"There is M. North," said Sophie.

Warden looked around to see North, alone, led by a dancing green devil to a table in one corner. The head waiter,

who was a statuesque figure all in red, unmasked but made up to the part, went to North's table and stood for a moment in talk. North was laughing as he replied.

"They've recognized him," murmured Sophie. "They don't know me, luckily. And who is this coming in now?"

"My party," returned Warden.

Half the tables were occupied, largely by tourist parties, and most of the booths on either side were filled. The couple now entering were met with great ceremony, and their wraps taken. Halsey looked more handsome, more distinguished, than ever in his evening clothes, and with him June Tully!

Warden blinked as they came forward, conducted toward a booth close by, marked with the name of Beelzebub. Was this June, in shimmering green evening wrap, or some one else? He had expected to see a shrinking, hesitant girl, compelled by force; instead, she was gay, laughing, as though having the time of her life and enjoying it thoroughly.

They passed close. Warden, staring, saw her glance sweep around; saw her eyes meet his gaze squarely—and detected not a hint of recognition in her face as she passed on.

"Name of a dog, wake up!" came the sharp admonition from Sophie Haller. "Don't stare like a fool, man! What's the matter?"

"She didn't know me!" muttered Warden. "She's drugged!"

"Bah! Where were your eyes?" retorted the lady. "She knew you well enough—her hand moved, gestured to you—and you were looking at her face! Use your wits in this game, my friend. Don't you see she's playing a part?"

Warden grunted disdainfully. He

saw nothing of the sort. He did see the Beelzebub curtains drop behind Halsey and June Tully, and anger rose in his eyes. But he kept quiet.

PROMPTLY at seven thirty, and not until then, was the dinner served; the doors were then closed until the next "show," which took place at nine. The reason for this was to become obvious later.

Halsey and his companion were installed in their booth—deeply upholstered on three sides—when the tall Mephisto head waiter, none other than the scarred Victor, pushed aside the curtains and bowed deeply to Halsey.

"*M'sieur*," he announced in sepulchral tones, "I bear a summons. His Highness, Prince Lucifer, demands speech with you in private. If you have an evil conscience there is yet time in which to depart."

Halsey glanced at June Tully and laughed.

"Excellent! You'll excuse me for a moment?"

He followed Victor across the floor to a doorway, and next moment the two men were in a private room, the office of the restaurant. Victor closed the door.

"*M'sieur*, there is a man here," he announced. "One M. North, an agent of that accursed Solomon. I recognized him at once from the photographs supplied to us all. He is alone. If you think he is on the trail of you or—"

"No," said Halsey, frowning a little. "In any event it will do them no good. She will disappear. You might have this man watched and taken care of in case he attempts anything, and point him out to me as we return."

"Very good, *m'sieur*. And a little behind you, as you entered, came in

two men, Chinese or Japanese. I think they looked hard at you."

"Oh!" said Halsey thoughtfully. "I must see them, by all means."

They returned to the floor and passed among the tables. North was pointed out, and then Halsey came to a halt as, at one side, he sighted the two Chinese. One of them was Dr. Lee, who rose and bowed very politely, but without noticing Halsey's extended hand.

"Good evening, Mr. Halsey!" he said with a peculiar irony. "This is, indeed, a very pleasant surprise! You could do me a great favor, if you will."

"Yes? Glad to do whatever I can," said Halsey, puzzled by Lee's manner. "What is it?"

"Return to me the envelope which you took from my papers," said the Chinaman calmly. "The one containing a letter in Chinese—which cannot possibly do you any good."

Halsey stood stock-still. The two men looked one at another. The second Chinese had not risen, but was quietly smoking as though not understanding the conversation. Something in the calm, assured air of Lee put any thought of denial out of Halsey's brain.

"Well?" he said with a steely bravado. "And what if I refuse?"

Dr. Lee shrugged lightly.

"Ah," he murmured, "in that case, of course, I am quite helpless. I have remembered that cup of broth, I have put conclusions together—and I found a cigarette stub in my cabin. One of those English cigarettes which you like so well. You would make things much easier for me, and possibly for yourself, if you would return that letter."

"Is this a threat?" demanded Halsey sharply.

"By no means," returned Dr. Lee, his face very bland. "It is—shall we say—an endeavor to do you a favor, my friend."

"Oh!" said Halsey, not quite comprehending the menacing irony. "Well, save your breath, doctor. The letter has been passed on to the right hands; and you'd better not try any tricks, let me tell you—either now or later. Especially not in this place."

SO, with a slight bow, Halsey passed on. Dr. Lee returned the bow, sat down again, and transferred his attention elsewhere. There was no suggestion, not even an undercurrent, of menace or ill feeling.

Halsey returned to the Beelzebub booth and fell into gay conversation with June Tully. At her suggestion the curtains were opened and left back, to afford a view of the room. A few moments later she was on the floor with Halsey, dancing. In passing the table of Dr. Lee, she exchanged a hand clasp and a word of greeting with the Chinese, but once more encountered the look of Warden without recognition.

Dinner was served—an excellent dinner, interspersed with dancing. June Tully danced only with Halsey. Warden approached her once, as though to ask a dance, but she coolly turned her back and he sheered off.

In each booth was a telephone. It happened that, midway of the meal, the buzzer in the Beelzebub booth sounded, and as it did so a devil outlined in neon tubes came to life against the wall. Halsey picked up the instrument from its stand.

"Yes," he said. "This you, Boris? Anything new?"

"Nothing much," replied a voice, vibrant with exultation. "Except that

we've got Pearson. Got him right here."

"Oh! Very well, then—keep him until I get back," said Halsey. "Better wait for orders in regard to him, hadn't you?"

"Not necessary," was the response. "Matsura just got in from London to question your little lady. We may turn our attention to Pearson. He's a weak sister, you know—one of these erratic genius chaps with no backbone and a lot of brain. He's not hurt to mention, and he's scared to death already. When will you be back?"

"In an hour. The car's waiting."

A soft laugh sounded. "Right! Good luck to you—and to her!"

The tables were cleared, and orders were taken for coffee and *liqueurs*. Then Victor stepped out to the center of the floor, doffed his long-feathered Mephisto's cap with a sweeping bow, and addressed the company in broken English—although he could speak that language perfectly when he so desired.

"Ladies an' gentlemen! Before ze coffee is served, you will kindly accompany me to ze lower regions. Wiz me you shall haf no fear of ze bad spirits, for you are under ze special safeguard of His Satanic Majesty. Ready! You will form in single file, if you please, and you will follow ze little devil Nicéphoro. Behold!"

And turning, Victor pointed. The large red statue of Mephisto was suddenly illumined in a bath of scarlet light, the eyes flashed fire and leered at the company, and the curtains of Hell were drawn back to disclose the arched mouth of a stairway that descended to parts unknown.

The company formed up with great laughter and wine-induced jests ringing on all sides. One of the little prancing green devils took the lead, some

hilarious spirit suggested forming the lock step, and the long procession wound toward the mouth of the stairway. Among the first were Halsey and June Tully.

Amid the confusion no one observed that Warden had disappeared from sight, though Sophie Haller was in line, with North directly behind her.

LITTLE by little the file wound down the steps and vanished. When

half were out of sight, Victor appeared, sending the green-devil waiters scurrying; coffee and *liqueurs* were placed about the tables as ordered. Victor himself, tray in hand, approached the Beelzebub booth, whose curtains were now drawn.

He stepped inside the curtains and set down his tray. Upon it were two long glasses of coffee, and two small glasses of cognac. He placed them carefully, turned—and came to a paralyzed halt. At his left, just inside the curtains, sat Jimmy Warden.

"Eh? Eh? What's this, *m'sieur*?" exclaimed Victor.

Mr. Warden held up his hand in restraint. He was busy with pencil and paper.

"So!" he observed, then glanced up. "Eh? You, Victor? What do you want?"

"Name of a name!" ejaculated the astonished Victor. "You know me, *m'sieur*? What do you here?"

"Is that your business? Go and ask M. Halsey, if you like." Warden folded and refolded the note he had just written, and tossed it on the table. "Go! Do you wish to read the note, also?"

Now the amazed Victor saw that here was some one who knew Halsey, who was leaving a message for him—undoubtedly, one of the right crowd.

So, not to be himself suspected of too much curiosity, Victor retreated with dignity.

Instantly the curtains fell, Warden seized his imitation note, pocketed it, and then changed the position of the two cognac glasses—placing each where the other had been.

Then, swiftly, he was out in the dining room and catching up with the tail of the procession. He was in time to tag on with the last as they wended in beneath the arch and started down the winding stairway.

Jimmy Warden chuckled to himself at thought of the booth with June Tully's wrap marking her seat, and the cognac glass before her place. Sophie Haller had needed only the details of his story to outline precisely what Halsey had in mind; for it appeared that the Abode of Bad Spirits had a certain reputation in the underworld, and had seen the finish of more than one Beaux Arts career.

She intimated, indeed, that the Sûreté was watching the place closely, for the general clean-up of Paris instituted by the present prefect was no bluff, and M. Chiappe was after the tourist traps with all the heavy artillery of the prefecture.

"We've spoiled one little game, anyhow," thought Warden, "and gosh, how I'd like to see what happens after Halsey puts down the wrong drink!"

He was still chuckling when the stairway ended, and he found himself crowded with the others in a large underground room, probably a former wine cellar.

The place was pitch dark, except for a glowing red ball of light which was tossed from one to another of three little green devils, who accompanied their play with weird shrieks and laughs, while women drew closer to

their escorts and shuddery cries of anticipation went up.

Abruptly, with a loud yell, one of the devils flung the red ball at the ceiling. It shattered, sent flames scattering about—and on the instant appeared the figure of Mephisto-Victor, all lighted in scarlet from below.

So strong was this light that it permeated the entire chamber, and showed, standing against a wall behind Victor, a massive stone coffin. Mephisto struck it with a trident which he held, and a luminous greenish light played on the coffin.

"A little entertainment which has been arrange' for you, my friends," declaimed Victor. "To show you ze power of His Majesty. Will you, over zere, kindly 'step up? You will not be hurt. We will kill you and bring you to life again—zis way, if you please!"

His trident darted out at Halsey, who stood in the front rank of spectators. There was a gasp from those around, then Halsey laughed and obeyed.

"I'll take a chance, Mephisto," he said cheerfully. "I'm so heavily insured, anyhow, that I won't have any luck."

THERE was a general laugh, and Halsey was placed inside the stone coffin, which stood on a raised step. He waved his hand at the spectators.

"So long, folks! If I don't come back, I'll see you later—there'll be a hot griddle ready for you all!"

There was another laugh. Suddenly the red light was cut off; Halsey was seen standing there, illumined by the greenish radiance playing around him. This died down and down into almost complete blackness, in which only his cuffs and his white shirt-bosom were

revealed—then, all of a sudden, a woman uttered a gasp, and another cried out.

“Look—look—his head—”

The head of Halsey had become a grinning skull—which moved slightly.

“Now he is dead!” proclaimed the voice of Victor, exultantly. “Now you see all ze pretty bones—”

A faint scream, a chorus of gasps. Where Halsey had been was now a skeleton, articulated, moving its hands. Halsey spoke whimsically, and the jaw of the skeleton moved in unison with the words, provoking fresh cries from the women, to whom the X-ray effect was ghastly enough.

“You folks seem to be getting more excitement out of this than I am—”

“Stop it!” cried out a tourist in startled alarm. “By the eternal, this is going too far—stop it! My wife’s fainted!”

For some reason these words started a burst of laughter. In the midst, the lights were suddenly turned on, flooding the place with illumination—and the skeleton in the coffin was Halsey, indeed. He stepped forth, grimacing, and Mephisto swung up his hand for silence.

“Now back for ze coffee and liqueurs, my friends, and zen out you go, all of you!”

Warden looked for June Tully in the crowd. He had arranged with North and Sophie that any one of them who might be close to her, should breathe a warning about the *liqueur*. He saw that Sophie was close beside her, North a little distance off.

Victor had halted Halsey and was speaking rapidly to him. Warden saw Halsey’s eyes sweep over the crowd and come to rest on him, with an expression of surprise. So Victor was telling him about the note!

Warden ignored the man, made his way to Sophie Haller, and they awaited their turn to ascend the stairs. North had slipped ahead. An instant later, Victor came to Warden and bowed, with a flourish.

“*M’sieur*,” he said in French, “if *madame* will pardon me and will excuse you, would you have the great kindness to give me a word in private?”

“Certainly,” said Warden, surprised at the request, but finding no animosity in the man’s words or air. “Another gentleman, perhaps, wishes to speak with me?”

“*M’sieur* has divined it,” and Mephisto bowed. “There is a little room here at one side, if *m’sieur* will follow me. Your pardon, *madame*—I myself will escort you to your table.”

Jimmy Warden followed his guide to a small, bare room separated by a curtain from the main chamber. He suspected that Halsey was curious and wanted a word alone with him.

“In two minutes, *m’sieur*,” said Victor, and vanished, to hasten the crowd’s departure.

Warden lighted a cigarette, patted the automatic in his coat pocket, waited until the shuffling feet and laughing voices had died down, and heard the music of the orchestra strike up a lively tune overhead. He put forth a hand to the curtain—then swung around at a slight, scraping sound. Somewhere beside or behind him a door had swung open. And all the lights had been switched off.

SWIFT as thought, Warden dropped to the floor, heard an oath and a rush of something through the air, and flung himself at the curtain.

“Missed him, imbecile!” rasped a voice.

Warden was in the dark outer room now, but a body collided with him, caught at him; he rose, feeling hands tearing at his throat. Some one else rammed into him.

"All right, let the fool have it!" came a sharp order.

Abruptly, his assailants loosed their grip, fell away. Warden was left standing there alone. A sense of imminent peril held him paralyzed for a moment. There was utter silence all around.

What were they waiting for—to get his position? His hand crept inch by inch to his pocket, found his automatic, slipped it out.

Still silence. A minute passed, interminable with suspense. Warden breathed softly, naturally, heard nothing. He was certain now—they were only waiting to locate him. Good! Then let them have it, if they wanted it!

His left hand slipped up to his necktie, worked out his scarf pin, a heavy gold dog's head. He flipped it between thumb and finger, and it fell somewhere with a rattle. Instantly there was a spat of fire, then another—two sharp, metallic sounds! Silenced revolvers, no doubt. A bullet ricocheted from the stone walls, with a thin whining scream.

Warden did not move.

Silence again; then a low voice in words he could not catch—some slang phrase. The stillness was jarred suddenly by noises from the floor above, the scraping of feet, the rise of voices. The company, then, was leaving.

Warden was considering, not merely his present situation, but his get-away. To escape by way of the stairs and the cabaret above was probably hopeless; yet there was no other egress from the cellar—or was there?

He recalled the little room whence he had just come, the scrape of a door; these other men must have come from some passage, then! And beyond doubt they had left the door open. He must try to find that curtain.

Besides, there was North upstairs. A shot would warn him, must warn him.

Venturing a careful step, then another, Warden reached out; yes, as he had thought, the curtain was within touch. Again a low voice, taking advantage of the upstairs noise.

On the instant, Warden fired—shot after shot, bullets plunging through the darkness, automatic spitting red flame-spats, the barking roar of his shots filling the darkness with volleying echoed sound.

Whether his fire were answered, he did not know. He heard a man scream, but was already plunging through the curtained way, feeling for a door beyond. He came to it, collided with a man, fired point-blank into the unseen body and heard it fall heavily, the man groaning in the blackness.

Whither the doorway opened, he did not know, and could see nothing. He jerked at the door and it swung shut, heavily. Feeling for a hasp, he found a bar and shot it home. A moment afterward men were trying to open it from the other side, in vain.

Warden struck a match, saw that he was in a stone-walled passage, and discerned an electric switch on the wall. He touched it, and light flooded the passage, which turned a sharp corner ahead.

Warden stood motionless for a moment, found the extra clip he had brought along, and reloaded his pistol. Surely, he thought, the firing would bring any one who might be at the end of this passage! Yet no one came. Be-

hind him was a pounding at the door, yet ahead of him all was silent.

Warden turned, looked at the heavy plank door, and deliberately placed a shot through it, waist-high. The pounding ceased. From the other side of the door came a thin sound that might have been the cry of a stricken man. Warden chuckled softly.

"Looks to me as though somebody were paying—and not Solomon's men this time!" he reflected. Then he started swiftly, alertly, along the passage.

CHAPTER IX.

INTERROGATION—ORIENTAL STYLE.

TWO men sat in a very ornate library—the library, indeed, of Dominetti's villa in Boulogne. One of these men was Boris Glazunoff, tall, slender, sallow-skinned, with vivid black hair, sharp eyes, handsome features, and the air of a man of breeding. The second man was short, spectacled, smiling—the same Matsura who had recently been in London.

The room in which they sat was on the west side of the house, its large bay window overlooking the garden. Now the blinds were closed; a double door at the far end opened on a small conservatory, filled to the very roof with all manner of flowering plants. A few bookcases stood about the walls, loaded with books in half a dozen languages.

In the center of the room was a large flat-topped desk, looking rather out of place among the other furniture, which included a Buhl table and secretary, massive chairs of carved oak and needle-point in the Louis XIII style, and a massive black oak receptacle built into the wall. The door of this last stood open, revealing shelves of various tobaccos and liquors.

Several solemn French portraits adorned the walls, and the ceiling was painted in graceful geometrical patterns. The room showed what the house was—the home of a wealthy family of a past generation, taken over and put to new uses.

Matsura sat at the desk, poring over papers under a desk-lamp. Boris Glazunoff was comfortable in a deep leather chair, smoking and sipping a drink that stood beside him. He looked lazy, very much like a snake basking in the sun.

"Clever trick," observed Boris. "So Dominetti got the letter, eh? And it had the one essential word cut out. Strange that you couldn't supply the word, Matsura."

"You are a scientist—and you looked blank when I showed it to you," said Matsura with a polite smile. He tapped the paper under his light; the same letter which June Tully had yielded up. "I conjecture that it must be a word of seven letters. It is a disk of some metal—I know not what."

"Cross-word puzzle without the crosswords, eh?" Glazunoff laughed quietly. "On the super-sonic wave proposition?"

The Japanese lighted a cigarette and leaned back.

"Yes. You followed that line of research, I understand? The audible limit of vibrations is, as you know, around forty thousand per second; this is sufficient for echo-detectors as used by the British and United States navies, but we must double or triple this number of vibrations. So far, nothing better suited for the purpose has been found than Langevin's slice of quartz rigidly held between two electrodes of three-centimeter steel."

"Exactly," drawled Boris. "Place your sandwich in contact with the

water, with its controlling circuit—an electric spark exciting the oscillations. All very well for deep-water work, but the most fascinating point about it is that the sound-beam kills all the fish it touches. To make this beam kill men—well, it would need vibrations of a quarter of a million per second. Slight difficulty, eh? Did Loomis manage it?"

THE little man at the desk spread his hands.

"Apparently, yes—and Pearson has managed it, too. We know that instead of the 'sandwich,' as you call it, vacuum tubes can be used; but what can be used as a resonator, except the quartz slice? There's the rub. In this letter, Loomis thrice mentions a disk of—what? This disk vibrates in an oil bath on the principle of Wood's disk, with which four hundred thousand vibrations can be attained. Loomis speaks of the disk as being created by the fusion of two disks, with the vibrating axis as the shortest dimension. Therefore, metal must be meant."

"Quartz can be fused," suggested Glazunoff.

"Quartz is not the word here; it contains seven letters—I have measured the cut spaces, very carefully, and the typewriting is most even throughout the letter."

"Well, we should know to-night from one or the other," and Boris shrugged. "If Halsey were not infatuated with that woman, I'd have had it out of her before this. Let him slip her the drug as he intends, and by the time she's been back here for an hour, she'll have lost all her will-power and resistance."

"She is a bright woman, and very dangerous," said Matsura suavely. "So you say she has not fought, has not tried to get away, but instead

has made herself agreeable? And she went with him to-night quite willingly? Then look out for her, my friend."

Boris laughed. "Oh, I warned him, but the fool is infatuated. He can take care of himself, just the same. If she's playing him, he'll be playing her in another hour or so. She'll give him what he wants, and she'll give us what we want—"

"And so will Pearson," said Matsura. "In fact, I prefer making a man talk by force, to getting the information from the brain of a woman whose control has been broken by that damnable concentration of *cannabis indica*!"

A hint of passion shook Matsura's suave voice.

"Hashish itself is bad enough," he continued. "This concentrated product is devilish. My friend, a brain is a sacred object, a thing more delicate than any man knows. A crime against the brain is frightful to contemplate! Once thrown off balance, once the will is destroyed, who can be sure of any result? She might speak the truth, she might not. She will certainly be abnormal for a couple of days."

"Whereas, dealing with a suffering man, you know what you're getting, eh?" Glazunoff laughed and lighted a fresh cigarette. "Well, you have the night before you; and the moment you get what you want out of Pearson, my men are ready to work. We'll put his little laboratory where it belongs—and whoever happens to be there, goes with it. You and your brain worship! That's because you're all brain yourself."

"Thank you for the compliment," purred Matsura. "It is a pity to destroy that workshop. Undoubtedly we should find experiments there, valuable papers, most interesting."

"Get inside if you like—I prefer to die otherwise," cut in Glazunoff, and rose. A faint bell had tinkled. "There's Halsey now, I expect."

Matsura put his papers together. Boris poured himself a fresh drink and went to the bay window, pushing aside the heavy velvet, silk-backed curtains. The beams of a car's headlights showed, just entering the garden—two men standing by the open gates.

"Halsey," and Boris drew the curtains again. "How long before the drug works on her?"

"That depends on the strength used," said Matsura. "An hour, perhaps less."

They waited, watching the entrance of the room, which opened upon the main hallway of the house. Presently voices were heard—men's voices, low, urgent, excited. Into the room came no woman at all, but Halsey, walking like a man drunk, supported by his chauffeur.

"What the devil!" exclaimed Glazunoff. "What's wrong, Halsey?"

"Dunno." Halsey lowered himself into a chair. His aristocratic features were blurred, his mouth slack, his eyes vacant. The chauffeur turned to Glazunoff.

I DO not understand it, *m'sieur*. He was all right when he got into the car, with *ma'm'selle*. We were turning into Rue Remusat when she rapped on my window and said M. Halsey was ill. I stopped the car and found him like you see him now. As I was trying to revive him, she disappeared—went running into that café at the corner of Rue Mirabeau. If I had followed and brought her back, there would have been trouble; a couple of agents were at the corner. So I brought *m'sieur* on here."

"The devil!" said Glazunoff. Matsura had come to the side of Halsey and was examining him attentively. "What happened in Rue Jacob? Anything?"

"As we left, yes," replied the chauffeur. "It sounded like shots, muffled. There were a number of agents and plain-clothes men from the Sûreté outside, too. Probably a raid of some sort. However, we got off before it happened."

Matsura looked up. He was smiling—that strange smile of the Oriental whose enjoyment of cruelty is supreme.

"I believe this is a most delicious joke, Boris," he said. "Halsey has taken the drug himself—you comprehend?"

Glazunoff swore. He caught Halsey by the shoulders and shook him savagely.

"Wake up, you fool!" he said, slapping the sagging face. "What happened, eh? Speak!"

Halsey looked up, vacuous, eyes rolling.

"Everything happened," he drooled, his head lolling again. "Man there—North—and 'nother man wanting to see me—Dr. Lee—"

His voice passed into a meaningless mumble.

"Let him be; it's useless," advised Matsura. "So our Chinese friend Lee was there, eh? I wonder why? Hard to make anything of this, my friend. And the woman is gone. Therefore, I suggest that we lose no time in getting to work on Pearson. We'll need both your big Russians."

"Right."

Glazunoff turned to the chauffeur, addressed him in Russian, and the man departed after a smart salute. Halsey remained limp in the chair, eyes open,

but apparently insensate. Matsura looked at him and shrugged.

"He will be asleep until some time to-morrow—and of no use for a couple of days more. Better have him put to bed and out of the way."

Boris pressed a wall-button, and another man appeared, who was given the necessary orders. Boris returned to his neglected drink, Matsura returned to the desk. Within five minutes Halsey had been carried away—and into the room came Pearson, between two Russians of huge size. In their hands Solomon's English scientist looked like a pygmy.

He was a fairly small man, of singular appearance. His ill-assorted features and body suggested abnormality; from the high brow, the face tapered to a weak mouth and chin, which could be stubborn but not strong. The eyes were wide-set, but now an expression of almost ungovernable terror was stamped in the whole face—aided by a large purplish bruise on his right forehead. His gaze fastened on Glazunoff, and he cringed; but it was Matsura who addressed him.

"Well, Mr. Pearson, I have come all the way from London to discuss a small matter with you. You do not know me, but that is quite immaterial."

MEETING the suave, implacable gaze of those slightly oblique eyes, Pearson shivered. Then, with an effort, he gave tongue.

"I won't!" he cried out in a shrill voice, and made a ludicrous attempt to break from the grip of his two guards. "That devil there tried to make me tell—I won't! I know what it is you want, and you'll never learn from me!"

Matsura smiled.

"So we do not need to—how do you say?—beat about the bush, eh? That

simplifies everything, my dear Pearson. You know, I have great respect for your researches, which I have followed in my own poor way for several years. You do not know me, perhaps?"

"Yes, I know you," said Pearson in his thin, high voice. "You're Matsura—the chap who was expelled from the University of Tokyo four years ago, and who went to Leningrad. And so you're working with Dominetti now, are you? I suppose you'll sell him out to the Bolshies, and make yourself a nice fat pile out of it!"

Matsura's eyes glittered—perhaps because Glazunoff gave him a glance and a lazy laugh.

"Come!" he said with less suavity. "You know what I want, my friend. You have found it, just as Loomis has found it; undoubtedly, his discovery improves upon yours."

"It does not!" cried out Pearson in sudden violence. "Loomis is a fool! He uses an oil bath, when he should use one of crude petroleum! And his fused disk is no better than my simple disk, when its curves are cut with care—"

He checked himself, glared at the smiling Matsura, conscious that he had nearly given away the secret.

"Perhaps, perhaps," said the Japanese. "And this disk is made of fused—what?"

"Damn you!" cried Pearson, the veins in his forehead swelling with passion. "You'll never know that, you yellow barbarian! Ah, that went in, did it?" A shrill laugh of triumph burst from him, as he saw how the shot told. "Ha, barbarian! You know the eye-film test, do you? How the rudimentary eye-film of reptiles is found only in the races most removed from all civilization—how it is found more frequently in Japs than in any other race? And what does that prove?"

Matsura responded to this childish, spiteful shaft in terrible manner.

"It proves that you will tell me the word I want to know," he said, "or you will suffer agony unbearable. You!" His hand swept up at the two Russians. "Tear the legs out of his body!"

The command was curt, carrying the lashing bite of a whip. It drove into Pearson, silenced his gibes, sent pallor creeping across his face.

The little Englishman tried to struggle—fought, kicked, bit. The two big Russians laughed, and a word passed between them. One of them caught Pearson about the shoulders—his arms were tightly bound behind his back—and held him thus, in a viselike embrace, motionless. The second man plucked up one leg, then the other, took one kicking leg in each hand, and with scarcely a visible effort began to force the two legs apart.

PEARSON cried out, madly, fell into oaths and foaming blasphemies, writhed and fought vainly in the grip of the two Russians. Then, abruptly, he fell silent and still; all his force, all his energy, was flung into resisting the ruthless arms that slowly wrenched his two legs wider and wider apart. His body trembled, quivered with the strain, sweat streamed from his pallid face, his eyes were distended, his mouth clenched.

"Stop!" commanded Matsura. The Russian checked himself, looked up. "Come, my friend, this is your last chance, remember. Save yourself and tell!"

"Go to—hell!" gasped Pearson.

"Proceed," said Matsura calmly.

The silent struggle was renewed. Again the legs of Pearson, bent upward at the knees, stiffened in every

nerve and muscle, striving against the pressure of the huge hands of the Russian. Suddenly the Russian laughed, as he felt those strained sinews give to the pressure. A despairing cry burst from Pearson, then shrilled up into a wild, awful scream of agony.

"Stop!" commanded Matsura. "Quickly, Pearson! The disk?"

"Crystal!" wailed the tortured man. "Crystal, you devil!"

Matsura motioned to the Russians, gestured with his hand. They departed, taking the groaning, sobbing Pearson with them. Matsura sat motionless, an expression of stupefaction in his flat, spectacled face. Glazunoff lifted his glass and drank, then laughed softly.

"Crystal! Your word of seven letters—crystal!" said Boris, half mockingly. "The same thing you've been using—another name for quartz?"

Matsura started, shook his head.

"No," he said. "Fused, remember! Two disks fused into one. It can undoubtedly be cut and mounted so the vibrating axis lies along the diameter of the crystal; but there the frequency would be reduced with the ordinary crystal. With the fused disk—who knows? Worth trying. What about Pearson?"

"Is he of any further value?"

"No," said Matsura, with a slight frown. "We have his secret—no evasion this time. Alive, he is a menace to us. There's no telling how much he has discovered, for he must have been working on some protection against the ultra-sonic waves."

Glazunoff touched the wall-button. A servant appeared.

"Send Signor Neri to me."

Presently a man appeared—a dapper Italian, who entered the room with a bow and stood waiting. Glazunoff

went to the desk and scrawled on a sheet of paper the words, in Italian:

"Death to all traitors and enemies of Fascism!"

He handed the paper to the Italian, and sank back again in his chair.

"Take one of those Fascist knives," he said, "and this paper. Put the knife into the heart of the man Pearson, pinning this paper to him. Take the body in the large car out to the Bois, and leave it near the lake. Understand?"

Signor Neri bowed and departed.

"NOT bad," commented Matsura, with a trace of admiration. "A Fascist murder—the victim an Englishman. There will be complications, eh?"

"Exactly," said Glazunoff. "That is Dominetti's idea throughout. You'll recall the riots not long ago when the French consulate at Livorno was mobbed? And a dozen other such incidents. This will react on London, of course. Our friends in Rome will be kept busy for a fortnight at least. And the twenty-fifth is only three days away, now."

"Very neat, all of it," said Matsura, with a complimentary intake of his breath, Japanese style. "And now, please—I have what I wanted. I must return to London at once. Will you telephone Le Bourget and have a special plane ready?"

Glazunoff shook his head.

"Against orders," he returned, taking down the telephone, and calling a number. "That has to be done by Baron Calvi—regular routine in this business. Hello! Boris speaking. Put me through to Baron Calvi, please."

There was a short wait.

"Boris speaking," pursued the Rus-

sian suddenly. "Report Halsey has been drugged, apparently by accident; safe in bed, but useless for a day or so. I secured the Englishman Pearson to-night and he was interrogated by Matsura; his body will be found in the Bois in the morning. We have found what we wanted—yes, the missing word. Matsura wishes to return to London immediately by air; will you have a machine ready? I'll send him out to Le Bourget. Ordërs?"

Glazunoff listened, then laughed.

"Yes, everything's in readiness. Santone is awaiting the word from me now. Very well."

He pressed down the instrument rack for a moment, called another number.

"Is this you, Santone? Boris speaking. Everything all right? You can go ahead whenever you choose—say, within an hour. Be sure and leave that Fascist pistol somewhere near the place—shoot it once or twice first."

Glazunoff replaced the instrument, took a fresh cigarette, and regarded Matsura with lazy insolence.

"Well, you have heard the orders, you have seen things set in motion; to-morrow you will hear the news of what has happened. Do you do these things better in Japan, eh?"

"I fear not," confessed Matsura politely. "In Japan, my friend, we have very efficient police."

"So does Paris," Glazunoff chuckled as he rose. "But we are superior to police. Come along. Get your things and we'll be off. I'll run out to Le Bourget with you."

"And leave the place with no one in charge? Remember Halsey—"

"Bah! We have men enough on watch, never fear! Ready?"

"In two minutes," returned Matsura.



The pilot saw that Stevens would shoot and take his chances

Two Men in a Ship

*"If they fall out of the plane, they'll only bust a rock," said a bystander—
and the problem that faced pilot Winston and passenger
Stevens was almost as tough as they were*

By LAURENCE DONOVAN

NO man around the Alameda airport would have done what Dave Winston's passenger did and have expected to live to tell about it. That is, no man knowing Dave.

At the same time, no one acquainted with Jim Stevens of the Big Sur country would have done what Dave did and have expected to survive. That is, no one well enough acquainted with Jim Stevens to know his record on the occasions when strangers had the temerity to cross him.

From grease monkeys and flag boys to Old Man Carter himself, an opinion prevailed that the slow-speaking Dave

Winston was a pilot and not a mob gunman solely because he had a streak of honesty that put him above mob stuff. Old Man Carter had been compelled to take him off the training crates after three successive deliveries of unconscious students.

"Tried to freeze on me," was Dave's laconic excuse each time.

"Some justification, yes," the Old Man had admitted, but the father of the third student, a moneyed importer in San Francisco, had threatened a damage suit when it turned out that his son had suffered concussion.

Whereupon the Old Man confided in

Big Tim Roth, his chief pilot, that he believed it would be for the good of the cause to transfer Dave to the taxiplane transport; and on Big Tim's say-so, Dave was switched.

Dave Winston had come to the airport as a workingman would have gone to any other job. He stood by, awaiting orders, and when he had passengers, he flew them to their destination and returned. When his hours were over, he left the field promptly. None there knew anything of his personal affairs or from where he had come. The Old Man knew only that Dave had said he had partly trained at Kelly Field during the war, but that he had not got across. His record was O K and his hand and judgment in the air perfect.

IF Dave Winston's cold, gray-blue eyes warned against taking liberties with him, the chilly, paler eyes of his prospective passenger, Jim Stevens, conveyed equal menace.

A Maddux transport pilot, who hailed from San Remo on the edge of the Big Sur country, was in the passenger 'drome the morning that Stevens came in and began negotiations in his rumbling voice for "one of them sky boats that would put him hell-hootin' into Salinas."

Glancing up, the Maddux man saw that Dave Winston's plane was carded as next out. He pursed his lips, whistled and observed to Big Tim, who was coming by:

"If that loud-tongued hombre goes out with Dave, look 'em over, Tim. They'll sure make a tough pair to draw to."

The chief pilot saw a red-faced man in his forties whose face indicated that each of his years might have added a wrinkle of some new meanness. From

the results of his conversation at the office window and the alacrity with which the clerk responded, Big Tim judged that the man was accustomed to getting what he wanted, and quickly.

Big Tim was standing close by when Stevens climbed into the cabined taxiplane. Dave directed him in curt tones to hook his arms through the seat parachute straps and fasten the front buckles.

"First time up?" Big Tim heard Dave inquire brusquely.

It was part of the routine. If the passenger were green, it was the pilot's duty to instruct him concerning his 'chute.

"Well, what if it is?" came from the passenger in a voice that mimicked Dave's growl.

Big Tim grinned at the Maddux pilot. "If either one of them fell out a thousand feet up, all he'd do would be to bust a rock."

The Draco taxiplane started thus auspiciously on its roundabout flight to Salinas. Five minutes after he had taken off from Alameda, Dave Winston made the discovery that started him detouring in the direction of the Sierras.

He had crossed the La Honda mountains, taking the side wind from the Pacific, when he found out that his passenger had one of those perfect air voices. Its rumble made it distinctly audible throughout the cabin, and Stevens was sitting close to Dave's right shoulder.

Stevens's spirits seemed to lighten, once he was in the sky. He had shown some interest in the passing vista of the San Francisco water front, the Presidio and the big guns mounted above the Golden Gate. A sudden laugh boomed out.

"Slick, I calls this," he said to

Dave. "Five minutes an' we're leavin' the city. It'd taken me an hour to have got to Frisco by ferry and another half hour to have caught a bus, with maybe three hours to Salinas. Then it'd been too late. Ten five now. The books open at noon sharp. I allow there'll be one hombre some surprised when he rambles into Salinas around two or three o'clock to find his nice little Camas Creek is all sewed up."

Had his passenger poked the point of a knife against Dave's ribs, the shock could not have been more electric. Dave's whole body stiffened and his knuckles went white on the controls. But he did not face around or say a word. He just listened.

"YUP. Ain't much on this sky business," went on Stevens.

"Gettin' too old to be huntin' up new ways to travel. Mostly a paint pony'll do me. But Stan White's due to get a jolt. One of the boys wired me this morning that White was startin' for Salinas in a car to grab off the Camas Creek water rights. Him an' a fellow named Winston, whose dad went bust on cattle, have been figurin' on turnin' the whole Winston ranch into avocado orchards—you know, them fancy alligator pears that the hoity-toity is payin' gold-brick prices for."

"Yeah?" muttered Dave in a queerly strained voice.

"Figured on the water out of Camas Creek an' spent a lot of good money. Never seen that young Winston, but while his partner's been doin' the work on the ranch, understand he's been outside somewhere rustlin' the coin to keep them goin' until they could get the water. State commission made a sudden announcement yesterday that

the first hombre layin' his money on the counter at Salinas after noon today would cop the rights. An' I'm guessin' that water'll run down my side of the ridge as easy as over to that Winston place."

His next few words were snatched away by a quick, breath-taking plunge through an air pocket.

"Whooee!" Stevens gasped as the ship leveled off. "This here now sky ridin' ain't so different from a buckin' hoss at that. That happen often, Mr.—I didn't get your name."

"Call me Dave," was the bitten-off answer.

So the chance at the water rights had come. For that Dave and young Stanley White had been waiting. Waiting and working, putting every dollar Dave could earn into preparing the ranch for setting out the avocado trees. A government horticulturist had tested the soil and assured them that, with the water, they had a fortune in the ranch.

The ranch had broken old man Winston. He had died while Dave was training at Kelly Field.

So this was the notoriously ruthless Jim Stevens. Dave had heard of him. Plunger in oil and cattle. He had bought up nearly all of the south side of Camas Creek ridge, running sheep on the scant pasturage. Had plenty of money, it was reported. Liked to gamble in big stuff, wildcat oil wells, or some of the big ranges still lying wild in the Big Sur country below the Monterey peninsula.

So he had heard of this avocado land prospect!

Sitting here boasting that he intended to grab Camas Creek. What would it matter to him that two other men had worked for a year, sinking every penny in their hope?

Stan White was on his way—crawl-

ing along the stiff mountain grades in their battered, old wreck of a car. If he started early this morning he would not make Salinas much before four or five o'clock. This Stevens here, with money enough to hire airplanes, could bid up the price on the water rights if necessary. No other man would want them. The water lay between the Winston ranch and Stevens's holdings.

Dave's knuckles on the controls were white again. His duty was to deliver his passenger at Salinas. And with their safe arrival, there went the prospects of his partner and himself. A year of work; their whole immediate future; the abandonment of the ranch that had embittered Dave's father and cost his life.

Stevens was still talking.

"Yeh. Always wanted to take a flyer at this alligator pear graft. I'll bring in a bunch of spigs an' show the world how to raise pears."

PLENTY of money. Stevens could hire Mexicans. Stan and Dave had expected to do their own work; even Stan's kid sister was out helping. She and Stan depended on Dave with his job to keep things going. A job that Dave hated. Not because he did not like flying, for he loved it. But he had been a country boy until the war had grabbed him off. He had never got over the idea that city men were patronizing him, sneering secretly at his back-country ways.

He had had to have the flying job, and he had had to show the city fellows that he could look out for himself. Short speech and toughness had been his armor when he was a rookie at Kelly Field. He had to show them he was hard.

Through a couple of minutes of Stevens's rumbling boastfulness, Dave

thought of all that. Slowly, almost unconsciously, he had been pressing the rudder bars. The plane no longer was headed due south. In five minutes it was miles off the direct course and its nose was pointing eastward toward the higher Sierras.

During those minutes, Stevens seemed to be enjoying the rumble of his own voice above the steady drone of the motor. Dave had been replying in monosyllables. Then Stevens glanced from the window, studying the ground below.

"Hey!" he shouted. "Ain't that San Jose back there?"

"Yes," stated Dave, voice raised only enough to be heard.

"Well, what the hell? You're goin' northeast—sa-ay, what's the big idea?"

"Dodgin' fog," replied Dave, not looking around.

Although some mist lay low over the coast far to the west, southward from San Jose toward Salinas the bare, brown hills loomed in bright sunlight.

Stevens looked doubtfully across the skyway.

"Looks plenty bright to me. You know it's comin' on eleven o'clock. We got lots of time, but you ain't makin' any time to Salinas, way you're goin'."

"You're goin' to Salinas," said Dave slowly. "But you're goin' my way. I'm flyin' this crate."

If Dave had been looking, he would have seen Stevens's eyes narrow. In the last minute or two he had been studying Dave rather than the increasingly rugged topography as the plane droned steadily toward the Sierra foothills. Perhaps for the first time he saw then some resemblance to old man Winston, whom he had known, or it may have been that a native intuition in reading men stood him in hand now.

Stevens's right hand hardly seemed to move, but when his voice veered from its rumble to a harsh command, a blue-barreled pistol of the old-fashioned type was laying across his knee, pointing at Dave's ribs.

"Don't know much about this sky game," he rasped, "but I said I was goin' to Salinas! An' we're goin' now!"

Dave was drawn around and he saw the weapon. He laughed shortly.

"Try it, mister, an' see where'd you'd be!"

"That's the game, huh?" snapped Stevens. "All right, Mr. Dave what's-your-name! I got just as much nerve as you've got, an' you're twistin' the tail o' this thing north or it's you an' me for it. I ain't givin' you no time, either. Now!"

FOR one flashing instant, youthful gray-blue eyes looked coldly into the paler chill eyes of the older man. That brief second told Dave that win, lose, or draw, this Jim Stevens would do exactly as he said. He might be green to the air, but he knew exactly what would happen and he was willing to gamble with it.

Dave kicked the rudder and turned the plane's nose southward. He could see no sense in inviting a chunk of lead between his ribs and he was fully convinced that Stevens was hard enough to do just what he said.

Neither man spoke for the ensuing ten minutes. Another half hour would put the plane over the Salinas airport. Stevens had ceased watching the ground layout. His pistol had not moved and his eyes had not left Dave.

But Dave had not yet surrendered to what looked like the inevitable. His brain was buzzing around another idea. All right, he would fly to Salinas. He

would land, taxi to the farthest corner of the field and then--

Dave was not quite clear what he would do, but he did not intend to permit Stevens to reach the courthouse at Salinas. A last minute nose-over might work, thought Dave. Or there would be a brief time after they landed when Stevens would be off guard. Perhaps Dave could conk him then, lay him out cold.

Sure, that might work. Stevens had the pistol. Dave could explain that his passenger had gone loco and pulled the gun. For a minute he had the idea that perhaps he could knock his passenger out, then turn him over to the police. Anything to delay his reaching the courthouse.

They were flying at around two thousand feet. At the urge of the pistol and the cold command in Stevens's eyes, Dave was heading straight for Salinas. Dave noticed the flock of high-flying sea gulls pass in front of the plane. Out of the tail of his eye he saw that several of them had passed through between the wings of the plane.

This was not unusual, for the birds have not yet grown accustomed to the man-made machine with a speed exceeding their own. It was Stevens's exclamation that turned Dave's eyes toward the crossing wires of the right wings. There he saw that one of the gulls had apparently struck a wire and had slid along it, the bird's body being firmly wedged between the wire and the upright strut between the wings.

The gull's wings were fluttering feebly. The driving force of the propeller's slipstream beat it more tightly into the narrow space between the wire and the strut. Stevens had turned half away from Dave and Dave heard him utter an oath.

The bird's wings flapped. Even above the noise of the motor, Dave could hear the piercing cry of the gull. Stevens said something Dave did not understand. Then, with another oath, he got from his seat. He still held his pistol, but when he had manipulated the catch of the door that opened directly back of the wings, he looked straight at Dave and laid the pistol on his chair.

"Hi, you!" yelled Dave at that. "What in hell you think you're doin'?"

Stevens gave a queer sort of grin, but he did not say a word until he had managed to get the door open, dragging his seat 'chute along with him.

"You can't get out there," shouted Dave. "Say, man, it'd take an old-timer to—"

"**W**HO the hell says I can't?" rumbled Stevens, and when Dave moved as though to get out of the control seat he reached out one huge hand and shoved him back.

"Your job's flying this crate—you said that yourself!" he shouted into Dave's ear, and before Dave could make another motion he had swung himself through the cabin door and was clinging to the braces alongside the fuselage.

Dave shouted again, but Stevens paid no attention. And Dave groaned, for he was sure that this air greener would pull himself out, get one look down and one mouthful of that tearing slipstream, and then it would be just too bad. Dave even recalled, with keen regret, that their blunt and angry interchange at the take-off had prevented him from instructing the man in the operation of his 'chute.

Jim Stevens may have been green enough; and probably he was scared

a-plenty, for Dave saw his eyes widen and bug a little when he was outside, clinging to the wing braces with the slipstream ripping at his coat. But he went on, foot by foot, slipping and swaying, hanging onto everything in sight.

Dave idled the motor an instant, thinking to lessen the force of the tearing stream of the wind, but he saw that the resulting glide had turned Stevens's lips white, so he gunned as slowly as possible to keep headway. It seemed like many minutes before Stevens reached the imprisoned gull. He had some trouble loosening it from its position, for he had only one hand and the bird, frightened and frantic, struck savagely at the rescuing fingers.

But he got the bird loose and had to use his free hand to catch at a strut to keep from sliding over as the gull fluttered out. In an instant the bird was only a distant speck.

Then Stevens turned. Dave saw that something was wrong. Rising in his seat, he saw that Stevens's dangling parachute had whipped around a strut. The force of the slipstream prevented him from loosening it. Stevens turned a rueful face toward Dave, as though asking what to do.

Dave motioned swiftly toward the breast buckles, and Stevens got the idea. With one arm wrapped around the strut he got the buckles unfastened. The 'chute still hung and trailed out in the wind as Stevens made his cautious way back to the cabin.

Stevens grinned again as he came through the door, but it had a sickish cast. He looked at Dave. His lips moved, but at first they made no sound. He was badly shaken, Dave could see that.

Then Stevens looked from Dave to

the pistol in the chair. Dave had not touched it.

Dave's voice was hard and bitter.

"Pick up your gun an' we'll start over again from here," he said. "I guess—well, we'll have to just call that 'time out.'"

"Aw, go to hell!" rumbled Stevens; and as he sank into the seat he pushed the pistol to one side and let it fall to the floor.

"Anyway, I'm takin' you straight to Salinas," said Dave. "You've earned that much, damn you!"

Stevens grinned rather weakly as he replied: "I wouldn't be too sure. You said you was dodgin' fog back there—I didn't think you was tellin' the truth then."

IN the interval that Dave had been watching Stevens on the wing he had not observed the obliterating cloud arising from the south and west. It swept up, around and, infolded the taxiplane.

Dave pulled the stick and angled upward. But it was a high-riding fog, and he had to climb two thousand feet before he was above the billowing surface. Except for the higher tops of the Sierras to the eastward, the earth had disappeared.

It had been Dave's experience that when things begin happening they do not come singly. Stevens did not say anything at the new sound in the motor while they were climbing, and Dave was aware that Stevens had not got the significance of the halting cough or two.

One or two cylinders were missing badly before they got into the sunlight. Dave had to give the motor everything it would take to hold altitude, and in that half mile or more of fog he knew he had to hold it.

A few minutes of that and Dave began thinking of landing facilities. The stuttering motor had not picked up. Any second now and it might go. Dave turned to Stevens, unfastening his own 'chute buckles with one hand.

"You've gotta put this on," he said. "It's the rules. Land a passenger without a 'chute an' my job's gone. See?"

"Yeah? Like hell I see," roared Stevens. "Passenger gets himself all tangled up in the machinery an' loses his 'chute, 'tain't your fault, is it?"

"You've got to put this one on," insisted Dave, getting the straps loose. "I'm flyin' this crate."

"Yeah?" said Stevens again. "Well, kid, you just keep right on flyin' it. Ain't no man tellin' me what I got to do."

At that another cylinder added its stammering to the lameness of the motor. The plane began to fall off and Dave knew it was no use. So far as he knew the hills under that fog, the softest place to be found would likely be the tilted, rock-strewn side of a range.

"Oh, all right," he growled, apparently giving in.

He reached out, monkeying with the instrument board, eyes on the pistol that had slipped close to his feet. Just then he got a few straight revolutions out of the motor and the plane leveled, but he knew it couldn't last.

"Look there!" shouted Dave with a horrified oath, his hand snatched from the controls long enough to point toward the wings back of Stevens. The unsuspecting passenger turned his head quickly.

At that Dave's right hand came up clutching the barrel of the pistol. The butt rapped Stevens squarely between the eyes and he slumped limply into his seat.

In the minutes that the motor rallied before it conked, Dave did some swift one-hand stuff. And then when he had the 'chute buckles fastened, he wondered ruefully if that would do any good. Once again he had struck harder than he had intended. He would have to bring Stevens back to his senses somehow if it came to a pinch.

But Stevens was still an inert heap when the plane dived into the fog with a dead stick, and Dave was holding it to as slow an angle of descent as was safe. And Stevens had not raised his head when Dave, to his astonishment, shot down through the ceiling to find himself within safe gliding distance of the Salinas airport.

"I SAID wake up!"

Dave shook Stevens's huddled shoulders. His passenger mumbled and finally raised his head. The daze in his eyes cleared slowly. He looked at Dave and rubbed one hand across the bump on his forehead. Then his other hand fumbled along his breast until his fingers were touching the 'chute buckles.

■■■ END.

"What a clout that was!" said Stevens slowly. "You damn fool! 'Tryin' to kill me? Where—where are we?"

"Salinas airport," said Dave, his voice weary and toneless. "You have ten minutes to get to the courthouse."

"Yeah?" said Stevens quizzically. "Kinda like to know your name, kid!"

Dave looked straight at him.

"I'm Dave Winston," he said. "Guess you knew that."

"Wasn't sure, but thought it," said Stevens. "Well, Dave, come along."

"Along? Where?"

Dave's voice was brusquely bitter again.

"To the courthouse, you damn fool. You an' me's filin' on that Camas Creek water rights for the Winston ranch. Get me? I'm thinkin' you boys'll be needin' some extra financin'—how about it?"

The two tough eggs stood looking at each other for a full half minute, cold, blue-gray eyes meeting paler eyes with the chill of steel in their depths.

Then the two tough eggs kind of grinned at each other.

The World's Richest Silver Mine

WHAT is termed the richest silver mine in the history of the world is "Broken Hill," Australia, which has produced ore valued at more than one hundred and thirty million dollars.

The mine was discovered by a "boundary rider," a man who rides the fences of the big sheep stations to keep them in repair. The story is told that a Scotchman and a greenhorn Englishman argued about the price of an original share of stock in the untried mine. The Scot wanted two hundred and twenty pounds, and the Englishman would pay only one hundred and twenty pounds. They played three hands of euchre to settle the question, and the Englishman won. The Scot, however, went outside and found a station hand willing to sell a share for ninety pounds!

One of those original shares of stock in the course of six years paid dividends totalling over six million dollars. *Wyman Sidney Smith.*



He speculated on how long it took a man to die with a rope around his neck

A Man from the Bad Lands

His neck in a noose, Taterleg Wilson rides with hostile cowmen after the rustlers, with the odds against him and not a man believing his mad tale

By GEORGE WASHINGTON OGDEN

Author of "Tophet at Trails End," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

TATERLEG WILSON, late camp cook for various Bad Lands cow outfits, has come to the Buffalo range, to find a war between the cowmen and the independents—nesters, sheepmen, grangers, and, the cowmen claim, rustlers.

He prevents his new boss, Colonel Beal Twitchell, czar of the range, from shooting the sheepmen's unarmed emissary, Austin Brady. Twitchell tries to force Taterleg to kill Brady, and Taterleg, outwitting him, throws in with the independents.

The cowmen demand that if the nesters are innocent, they catch the real

rustlers. Taterleg, on a wild guess, goes courting Myrta Dolson, free-and-easy but kind-hearted daughter of the shiftless moonshiner Park Dolson. For Dolson's is a hang-out for the cowmen; and Taterleg thinks it queer that Dolson has forgiven Twitchell and the other cowmen for hiring Texas gunmen, who killed Dolson's boy in mistake for himself. Wes Twitchell, the colonel's mean son, is still Myrta's most favored admirer.

Taterleg's story of a fight with Brady is accepted, and he ends up by riding from Dolson's (where Myrta protected him from being robbed) with

This story began in the Argosy for February 1.

a rustler, Ches, and some cattle. They find two bodies by a deserted camp; Dolson had killed the Texas gunmen!

At the rustlers' camp, Taterleg hears that Wes Twitchell is going to make a "smoke" in the rangeland that will cover the rustlers' final and greatest raid. Taterleg, knocking out the rustler Powers, rides away with another, Wallace, as his captive, but is pursued and has to free him. But he has a blank bill of sale with Beal Twitchell's signature, real or forged, which the rustlers had used to cross the range and sell their stock. Brady thinks Beal Twitchell is stealing his own cattle, which are too heavily mortgaged to sell otherwise.

The "smoke" proves to be a raid on the nesters, organized by Wes Twitchell in his father's name. The nesters beat off the cowmen, and Taterleg, to prevent further killing, goes to the leaders of the raid with his story and the bill of sale. They are skeptical, but Winslow of the Triangle S takes Taterleg to confront Twitchell, while others ride toward Horsethief Cañon, where the cattle were being assembled according to Taterleg.

Twitchell indignantly denies his or his son's guilt, but when he high-handedly burns the bill of sale, Winslow insists that he accompany them and Taterleg on their search for Wes Twitchell and for any trace of the reputed rustlers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

REFLECTIONS ON HANGING.

GREATLY to Taterleg's surprise and Beal Twitchell's satisfaction, the chuck-wagon was still standing in the spot where Taterleg had served his brief engagement as cook to

the rustler crew. Twitchell said that evidence exploded that damn' nester's charge of Wes Twitchell's complicity in the thieves' operations. It was Twitchell's wagon; the cook for the outfit had quit a week or ten days ago. If they would wait there a while, some of his men would come trailing in and put the finish to the grand blow-up of that mangy rascal's tale.

The cowmen agreed it would be wise to camp there. The horses were fagged, and it was already too dark to go scouting in the hope of picking up anybody's trail. If, between then and morning, they got no news of the party that had gone to Horsethief Cañon, they would follow and see if anything could be learned to check Taterleg's story.

Some of the cowmen in that bunch seemed to be hopeful that Taterleg's case was about to collapse; he could feel it in their changed attitude toward Twitchell, the general relaxation of the strained silence they had held. Nothing would please them better than to have Twitchell and his son cleared of suspicion, Taterleg very well knew. In that event, the charge of rustling would rest against the nesters again.

Taterleg put on the most cheerful face that he could pull under the doubtful circumstances, offering to give the cowmen the benefit of his cook's lore if they were game enough to trust their lives in his hands. Winslow told him to go ahead and turn himself loose; if he was any kind of a cook at all, his worst would beat their best a mile.

When he went rummaging in the wagon, Taterleg discovered that somebody had been there after grub. Boxes had been opened, flour spilled; everything indicated that whoever had done it had been working in a hurry. Taterleg's sack had been emptied and his concertina was gone.

Supper over, the tin plates and cups thrown unwashed into the box, Taterleg went to picket his horse in a spot where he knew the grazing was good, quite aware that two cowmen had detached themselves from the group at the tail of the wagon and were following him. He heard them trailing after him through the tall grass, and heard them as he tied his picket rope to a sapling. They were taking no chances on his cutting their company; they were so close to him in the dark he could hear them shift their feet where they stood watching his movements and spying on his intentions.

He turned his back on the pair of them contemptuously, although he felt like pulling his gun and drilling them for their lack of faith in his honorable intentions. Fine bunch of cowmen, these! A big show for justice a little bow-legged man about Taterleg's size would have with them if things failed to turn out the way he had expected, he realized.

TWITCHELL was sitting on a box near the fire, although the night was warm, trying to bake the "misery" out of his joints. The long ride must have intensified his rheumatism cruelly.

Taterleg had a passing wave of sympathy for the rough-hewn old cowman, who had gone through the thick of it on that bleak range for so many years. Take him for better or worse, he was the best man in the bunch, ruthless as he was in handling anybody that stood in his way.

The two hands who had trailed Taterleg joined the others, who were lying around propped on elbows, smoking and talking in close-mouthed words which were not intended for his ears. Taterleg scorned keeping company

with a bunch of men whose vacillation and mean suspicions made them unworthy. These weren't cowmen such as he had always known and liked.

He swung himself to the tailboard and got out his pipe, feeling uneasy for all his outward nonchalance, thinking something must have strengthened their confidence in Twitchell and center their distrust on him. He wondered what had happened while he was picketing his horse. He suspected that Twitchell had succeeded in talking them around to the belief that he and Brady had forged his name to that burned bill of sale.

He had ample confirmation very soon that they had been talked around against him, someway. As he struck a match to light his pipe Twitchell looked up at him, pausing in the chafing of his swollen ankle, his face inflamed beyond its customary redness by the fire.

"Git to hell off of that wagon!" Twitchell ordered. "What're you tryin' to do — set it afire with your damn matches? Git to hell off of there, I tell you!"

Taterleg adjusted himself deliberately on the edge of the tailboard, and swung to the ground with a show of indifference, although he was swallowing more words that minute than he ever had taken at one dose before in his life.

"I guess it's your wagon, mister," he remarked, with apparent lightness and no umbrage. "You'd better hang it on your watchchain, if you're so blame p'tic'lar of it."

"I'll hang you on something else!" Twitchell threatened, glaring at him red-eyed. "If you fellers had brains enough to grease a wagon you'd string him up to one of them trees down there by the crick."

"Well, we're not goin' to hang any-

body on suspicions to-night," Winslow replied. "But I guess you'd better hand that gun over to me, nester."

"Says which?" said Taterleg.

He wheeled sharply at the word to face the half-recumbent cowman, so quickly, indeed, and with such bristling belligerence, that half a dozen men leaped to their feet. Taterleg found himself the center of a ring of guns.

"Gentlemen, what's bitin' you now?" he asked.

Winslow was on his feet, hand extended for Taterleg's gun.

"I think it'd be better for all concerned if you was to give me your gun without any more words," the cowman suggested.

Taterleg jerked the weapon from his scabbard, reversed it, laying the butt in the cowman's hand. He did it with the most expressive pantomime of disdain the cowmen ever had witnessed. It was so expressive that it got under the hides of two or three of them, who prodded him with their guns and warned him to go slow, assuring him that it was not his time to flare up and insult anybody. They swore they had stood about all from him they were going to stand.

OLD Twitchell sat rubbing his ankle through this scene which his curt order had precipitated. Winslow poked around with the gun, trying to find some place about his anatomy where he could wedge it. But his cartridge belt was too loose, his bellyband too tight, so he gave it up and stuck it under his arm.

"Nester—"

"My name's Wilson, Mr. Cowman," Taterleg corrected him, with as much dignity as an unarmed and inwardly disturbed man could muster, in a ring of bare guns.

"Wilson, Colonel Twitchell and some of these men think you've tricked us, pullin' us off up here to give Brady and them grangers the upper hand on us. You've done a lot of talkin' about smoke-raisin', but if this is a trick of that kind you're puttin' over on us it's goin' to be a damned expensive one for you!"

Taterleg looked at him with unwavering eye.

"It would 'a' been a purty slick move," he said, "if we'd wanted to turn on you and exterminate the rest of your breed that's camped down there. But you're givin' me a credit for more sense than I ever had. I never thought of it."

"Nobody said you did, you splay-footed snoozer!" Twitchell told him, glaring up savagely. "Brady figgered we'd consider you a harmless damn fool and turn you loose. Playin' simple is your long suit—I've seen you try it before."

"Set over there where we can see you," Winslow directed. "Come daylight, we'll see what's to be seen."

Nobody was counting on doing any sleeping in that camp. There was plenty of wood, cottonwood branches which Taterleg himself had collected during his short service under Wallace. Taterleg sat in the circle of cowmen like a little bow-legged Buddha, the central figure of some rite. He relit his pipe and smoked meditatively, while they talked around him in low voices.

He was disturbed far more than his calm, outward appearance disclosed. This new and unexpected turn had hit him hard. He had to hand it to Beal Twitchell for unique and original thinking. Twitchell's scheme was to incite the cowmen to hang Taterleg, in that way removing the only evidence that would remain if Wes and the oth-

ers succeeded in scattering the stolen cattle over the range, as they were sure to do when they found it impossible to make the drive to Jackson's Hole.

Cattle might, and did, wander great distances in the course of grazing. It would be no proof of anybody's dishonesty to find three or four brands on Twitchell's, or anybody's, range. Unless these cattlemen caught somebody driving the stock off, there would be no case at all.

With Taterleg duly swinging on a limb, the fake bill of sale in ashes, nothing would remain to cloud Wes Twitchell's name. It looked to Taterleg Wilson as if he had allowed enthusiastic confidence to run away with his common sense. Brady had sized the cowmen up right.

Time traveled in a hobble for Taterleg Wilson that night, sitting on the ground in the firelight, a ring of unfriendly faces around him. Never in the long loops of the erratic trail which he had made from the Arkansas to the Bad Lands, and from the Bad Lands to the North Platte, had he been wedged into a situation so uncomfortable.

SUCH difficulties as he had met in the past, and they had been neither few nor colorless, always had been of the sort that a blow or a shot, or a stiff play with a gun would settle and leave the atmosphere clear. This was a case that appeared cut out to hang on till morning, maybe well into tomorrow, leaving a man tortured by the uncertainty of the outcome, powerless in any event to throw a gun and make his exit like the hombre that he was.

It was not pleasant to sit there and speculate on how long it took a man to die with a rope around his neck.

They didn't give a man much of a

drop when they strung him up on the range; sometimes when they cut the horse from under him his feet struck the ground, and he was not more than half hanged.

Taterleg ruminated on what a man's feelings were when that miscalculation prolonged the misery of his end, swinging there with his toes touching the ground, without life enough in him to ease the strain of the rope. It made a man sweat to think of the horror of such a situation, in which he could neither die expeditiously nor ease the pangs of his prolonged throttling.

Maybe they would shorten the rope and give him another drop in case of such outrageous malpractice; maybe not. He remembered a murderer hung in that manner of half hanging on the Arkansas. Days after the coroner had cut the miserable fellow's body down and carted it away, Taterleg had ridden past the place and seen the hole kicked in the sand by the slowly dying man. He had dug the earth away with his toes to shorten the cruel prolongation of his sufferings.

Taterleg definitely did not want anything like that to happen to him. Even if he had been guilty of a hanging offense, he would have preferred greatly to go some other way. When it came face to face with it, hanging was no joke.

He did not look at his watch to fix the slow passage of time, but the Big Dipper was revolving around the pole star with the slow and accurate sweep of an hour-hand, its position indicating ten o'clock. It was a long time to go till morning, and he concluded he'd might as well try to get what sleep was coming to him in this world.

He asked the cowmen to pass his saddle inside the line, which they did—with the kindly deference, he thought,

that a warden shows a condemned man when he gives him fried chicken for breakfast on the morning he is to be hanged.

Beal Twitchell had rubbed the pain out of his ankle and swollen knee. He was sitting off an aloof distance with three other cowmen, talking in low rumbling which seemed to Taterleg the growl of thunder in the approaching storm that would sweep him into eternity as soon as it grew light enough to pick out a proper limb. Well, they could only hang a man once, and every man had one hanging coming to him, he reckoned. He had said so many a time.

Taterleg was lying on his back, eyes on the vast dial where the Big Dipper revolved, when he heard the uneven chopping of hoofs. Several horses were approaching at a trot, riding down on the campfire from under the sullen white dot of the North Star. Now others heard the sound. They scrambled to their feet, guns slipped out of their holsters, the firelight twinkling on the polished trimmings.

A hail from the dark; an answering shout from the band around the fire. Four men rode into camp, one of them a prisoner whose feet were tied with a rope passed under his horse's belly.

Taterleg sat up with keener interest than his languid movement betrayed. The men who conducted the prisoner belonged to the bunch of cowmen who had ridden that morning for Horsethief Cañon, and the man with the rope on his ankles was Twitchell's cow hand, Mitch Powers, in whose nostrils the smell of a nester raised such a sickening revulsion—the rustler Taterleg had just missed killing, in this very camp!

Taterleg got up, feeling as if he had shed the troubles of a thousand years.

Maybe a substitute would be forthcoming for that hanging in the morning, after all.

CHAPTER XIX.

TWO SHOTS.

YES, caught him with the goods, announced the newly arrived cowmen. That little bow-legged crawfish of a nester had given it to them straight. Caught this fellow driving twenty-six head of mixed brands hell-bent for Jackson's Hole. They found him and another man, but the other one slipped them in the dusk of evening, got into a wooded cañon and escaped. Yes, they had spotted him. He was a cow hand on Twitchell's Circle BT, by the name of Ches.

Taterleg's first thought was that he was glad Ches had got away; his next that Powers would have time to think over his past life while hanging, for he was so light it would take a drop of seven feet to crack his neck. And then came a sweep of relief and warm satisfaction in standing justified and clean before those cowmen, whose respect he would rather have, when it came down to cases, than the good will and confidence of all the bankers that could be assembled in a forty-acre field.

Powers was putting up a front of insolent defiance, common to men of his type who carry their sneering obscenity even to the gallows trap. His horse was standing not more than four yards from the spot where Taterleg had been lying; the sinking fire threw a wavering light on his face.

Powers's little rabbit nose was working as if he had just bitten off a sweet sprig and was mincing it into a cud. His eyes were fixed on Beal Twitchell with sneering malevolence which

seemed to indicate that he was taking a rascal's triumph in the disgrace that had caught up with the old cowman at last.

Twitchell was standing where he had risen to his feet, so far from the fire that its light did not reach his face. What the old man's emotions were in that dramatic moment Taterleg could not see, but from the pose of his body he seemed to be standing in the paralysis of tremendous passion or speechless fear. He was set in his tracks like a stone man, as if he had started to do or say something, but could not summon his will to move either hand or tongue.

"Colonel Twitchell, it looks to some of us like it's time for you to begin doin' some explainin'," Winslow, the old cowman of the Triangle S, proposed.

"Explain, hell!" said Powers, jerking his sneering little nose.

Twitchell started as if fury had unleashed him. He came forward, halting within a few feet of Powers's horse, where he stood glowering at the prisoner. Turning then to Winslow, and to those who stood behind him like a hastily drawn jury, Twitchell threw out his hands in a gesture of passionate disclaimer of knowledge or complicity.

"As God A'mighty is my judge, gentlemen, if this man has been caught with stolen cattle I don't anything about it!"

"Yes, double cross me, you old devil!" Powers sneered. "Lay down on the hired man like your damn' kid laid down on us! It runs in the breed."

"**Y**OU gentlemen better think twice before you let your suspicions run away with you on the word of a thief," Twitchell appealed to them, his voice grave, his bearing steady.

"La-a-y down on me, you old crook!" said Powers. "Ask him," he appealed to his captors, "what he knows about the bill of sale that little bow-legged guy stole off of me."

Powers did not wait for such demand on Twitchell. He leaned over his saddle-horn, glowering at Taterleg:

"If I had my gun I'd burn you to a frizzle for that jolt you give me!" he said, cursing Taterleg by all his obscene gods.

"Shut up!" one of the guards who had remained mounted beside the prisoner commanded. He jerked Powers up in the saddle roughly, keeping a hand on his shoulder, as though he believed a man so tricky might wriggle out of his bonds.

Winslow was looking hard at Twitchell, waiting his explanation.

"I'm not the first man that's had his name forged," Twitchell said, "no more than I'm the only man that ever hired a thief."

"Take me to court!" Powers challenged, defiantly. "Put me up in front of the jury and I'll tell 'em where Wes Twitchell and this old crook—"

Twitchell fired as Winslow, too far away for interference, leaped to strike down his arm. Powers drew himself up rigidly, stretching every muscle and tendon in what seemed to be a convulsive effort to leap straight out of the saddle. His face was fixed in an expression of horrified surprise, a look which it held as the glimmer of life died out of him like a spark in tinder.

Powers's horse had jumped at the roar of the gun almost under its nose. A man caught the bridle, stopping it as it would have bolted away. Powers slumped forward, hung a moment on the saddle-horn, then sagged across his horse's withers, where the rope on his

feet held him, one arm dangling almost to the ground.

Confusion followed, in which Beal Twitchell alone seemed unmoved. He stood more like a stone man than ever, feet apart, the elbow of his gun arm pressed against his ribs, looking sternly on the havoc he had made in the informer's affairs. Winslow confronted him with solemn accusation.

"You've played hell agin, Twitchell!" he said.

"I'm not goin' to stand still and let even a damn thief scandalize my name!" Twitchell replied, never taking his eyes from the dangling limp body of the man whose damaging tongue he had stilled.

"Maybe there's more than one way of lookin' at a man's reason for actin' the way you've acted, Twitchell."

"It saved you the trouble of hangin' him," Twitchell said, still holding the dead man in that stony, unwavering stare.

"Looks more like you was in a mighty big hurry to get rid of the evidence," the lank old cowman charged. "This makes the second time you've got it out of your way to-day, Twitchell, and I'm here to tell you it's goin' to be the last."

"Tend to your own damn' business, Winslow, and I'll tend to mine!"

THREE men were easing Powers to the ground. The others gathered around Winslow and Twitchell, ominously silent. Taterleg, feeling himself apart from the present proceedings, threw some light wood on the fire to make a blaze for the men who were trying to untie the rope on Powers's feet.

The quick blaze revealed Taterleg's gun lying where Winslow had dropped it at the riders' approach. Taterleg

shoved it into his holster, feeling that his manhood had been restored as his honor had been vindicated. It began to look as if Beal Twitchell had taken his place under the shadow of that terrifying limb.

"You'll have to explain these doin's to the proper authorities, Twitchell," Winslow said.

"I expect to," Twitchell replied, unmoved.

He relaxed a little from his stony pose, yet did not lower his gun. The firelight was bright on the faces of the men who pressed around him; he swept a glance over them as if measuring their intention and courage, his gun following his eyes as he turned his head.

"I'll have to ask you to hand over that gun, Twitchell," Winslow said.

"I've never handed it to any man, and I'm never goin' to," Twitchell informed him. "When I'm ready to lay it down, I'll lay it down."

"We're takin' you to the sheriff, Twitchell, and we're takin' you without your gun on you," Winslow declared.

"Like hell you're takin' me!"

Twitchell backed away as he spoke, moving his gun in threatening arc. He backed off slowly, watchfully, until he stood with his back against the tail-board of the wagon. There was something so forbidding in the old man's look that no more words from him were necessary to make them understand the gravity of the situation.

They stood many against one, but that one had the advantage of a gun in his hand. He had no chance if they should go after their guns, but in the break of drawing them, somebody would die. Not a man of them but felt that he, in such event, was the one spotted to go.

"When the sheriff wants me he'll know where to find me. I've been there a good while, and I aim to stay," Twitchell told them. He jerked his head imperiously, his eye for a moment on Taterleg. "Fetch me that horse!"

"I'm not workin' for you, cowman," Taterleg replied.

There was a distance of about fifteen feet between them. Taterleg was standing in front of the old man, a little to his left. The horse in question was one of the number ridden into camp but a few minutes before. It had bolted at Twitchell's shot, but had been caught by somebody on the edge of the group, and now stood with drooping head, weariness in every line, directly in front of Twitchell, not more than twenty feet away.

FETCH — me — that — horse!" Twitchell repeated the order, slowly, menace in every hard-stressed word.

Taterleg felt his hackles rise; a cold prickling ran over him, tingling in the ends of his fingers, seeming to sparkle behind his eyeballs, making him keen and alert as a whiff of winter wind. He pulled a long breath and held it, his arm muscles set to jerk his gun.

There was not a chance in a thousand that he could even touch the stock. Twitchell had only to swing the muzzle of his gun eighteen inches to bear on him, and the old man was in the right humor to make this defiance of his authority an excuse for removing a little more evidence that night.

Twitchell seemed to swell with anger when Taterleg did not move a foot to obey his second command. But he hesitated a moment before swinging his gun to bear on the object of his wrath, and in that moment Taterleg's

chance in a thousand lay. Taterleg threw two shots into Twitchell as the old man pulled his trigger. Twitchell's shot knocked earth two inches from the toe of Taterleg's left boot, and splashed dust on his corduroys to the knees.

The cowmen came forward with necks craned, slowly, cautiously, as a careful man approaches a dangerous beast that has fallen before his gun. Taterleg shoved his pistol into the leather with a feeling of profound regret. He stood a moment looking at the huddled figure at the end of the wagon. Then, slowly, he turned to where his saddle lay beside the fire, picked it up, tucked it under his arm and walked away unchallenged.

That feeling of regret, almost of sorrow, deepened over Taterleg as he pulled the cinch tight, set foot to stirrup and swung into the saddle.

"I set out to put a notch in your tail, old feller, but I never aimed to carry it as far as this," he said, looking back where the firelight made a little point of yellow against the wall of night.

CHAPTER XX.

A MAN RIDES AWAY.

TATERLEG was through with that bunch of cowmen. His urgent desire was to put as many miles between himself and that outfit as his tired horse and his own weary body could stand. That scurvy crew—a disgrace to the name of cowmen—did not look as noble to him as they had when he stood under the shadow of disgraceful termination at their hands; their good opinion did not appear one-half as desirable to him now.

They had not played up so very well

before Beal Twitchell. If the old man had ordered one of them to fetch that horse he would have been obeyed, Taterleg believed, with a feeling of shame for the degeneracy of a once respected fellowship.

"Well, sir, horse," said Taterleg, taking the animal into his confidence like an old friend, "I don't know what your opinion on it is, but I'm soured on cowmen. But I ain't believin' these long-maned, gourd-faced animals that's infestin' around this country are the same breed as the cowmen I used to know down on the Arkansaw. I ain't believin' it, horse; I just ain't.

"I bet you a ginger-snap them fellers 're settin' around the fire back there tellin' what they'd 'a' done to that old cow colonel in another minute if some upstarter of a nester hadn't 'a' beat 'em to it. And I wish to hell one of 'em had the credit! Old man Twitchell was wall-eyed and ornery, and too dang sudden in his way of jerkin' out his iron; but he stood head and shoulders above any of that bunch.

"Guilty or unguilty, he stood by his own, and he pulled out and he fit for 'em, and he laid down and died for 'em. He'd 'a' killed everybody on the range to cover up the doin's of that broncho-eyed kid of his. And he'd 'a' got me if that draw old Bat Masterson learnt me back in Dodge hadn't stood me good to-night." Taterleg was silent a moment, then took a new tack.

"Funny about Powers, eggin' the old man on to kill him that way. I take off my hat to Powers; he had more grit back of that rabbity nose than I give him credit for. He knew he was in for hangin', and he was man enough to head it off. Wonder where Wes is? Double crossed 'em, Powers said. But you can't put no dependence in what a man says when he's tryin' to argue out

of bein' hung, tryin' to make a man so mad he'll pull out and shoot him in place of savin' him till morning for the rope.

"Well, maybe the old man was guilty at that; maybe he wasn't. I don't reckon anybody'll ever know for sure whether he was tryin' to cover up Wes's trail, or his own. I started out to put a notch in his tail, but I never intended to bore a hole in his gizzard. I aimed to hurt him, some way, soak him with a double handful of disgrace if I could do it, but I never wanted to bust him wide open the way I had to. He meant well, I reckon, but he was runnin' wrong.

"Well, horse, this looks like a purty good place for me and you to rest our bones till daylight. It smells like there might be some grass here for a feller about your size. What do you say?"

HE took it for granted that the horse agreed. Unsaddling, he picketed the animal to a bush. Then he kicked around to find a fairly level place for himself, stretched on his back, saddle under his head, and soon was virtuously asleep.

There was mist in Dolson's Cañon when Taterleg crossed the hills at sunrise. As he rode down into the cañon there was the damp feeling of autumn, and a leafy smell of autumn, and a squirrelly smell of woods. Around Dolson's corrals there was a look of desertion, but a little streak of smoke rose from the stovepipe, spreading like a mushed bullet against the cold upper air. Myrta heard him coming; she hailed him from the door as he was going by.

"Hello, Jerry!" she called, with warm familiarity. "Where you been gallivantin' to, goin' home so early in the day?"

"Been out to a party," he replied, with a friendly smile. He had never forgotten how Myrta had kept him from being robbed, that night at Dolson's.

"Party? What kind of a party?"

"Hangin' bee."

Myrta's eye widened; her face grew pale.

"Who was they hangin'?" she asked, an impeded dry sound in her voice.

"It come purty near bein' me, but it turned out it wasn't nobody—least it wasn't while I was there. They was waitin' to ketch him."

"Ketch him? Who?"

Myrta was greatly disturbed. She was feigning incredulity, shocked ignorance, but Taterleg saw in her eyes that she knew far more than she betrayed.

"Feller by the name of Wallace, and another feller by the name of Wes. They got Powers last night."

"The cowmen?"

He nodded. Myrta came through the gate in a dazed, shocked, distracted way. She seemed to stagger through sudden weakness, or else it was that she stumbled on the rock-strewn ground.

She caught his rein near the bit, as if to steady herself, looking up at Taterleg with horrified eyes.

"Did they—did they—hang him?" she whispered.

She swayed as if about to fall. Taterleg reached down and took her free hand, which groped toward him as if she could not see. Under her weight on the bit the horse, which had stood facing the gate, was slued almost halfway around, Myrta stumbling at the stirrup in a bereft and stricken way that moved Taterleg's compassion.

"No, they didn't hang him, Myrta.

Old man Twitchell shot him before they had a chance."

Terrribly upset about Powers, he thought, a feeling of distrust and suspicion edging into his mind. She was queerly weak in the knees, all of a sudden. A cold, creepy feeling seemed to move the hair at the back of his head as he thought of the possibility that old man Dolson was leveling a gun at him from a corner of the house. He threw a quick look over his right shoulder, and jerked his gun with that flashing draw in which the famed marshal of Dodge City had trained his hand.

"Drop it, kid!" he said.

Wes Twitchell, a gun in his hand, stood at the gate as if hesitating between taking a chance and obeying the command.

"Drop it!" Myrta screamed.

WES dropped the gun. Taterleg swallowed a dry lump and beckoned with a jerk of the head for the young man to come outside. Wes obeyed, hands lifted, stepping as if he walked among strands of barbed wire.

"That ain't no kind of business, pullin' a gun on a man behind his back," Taterleg reproved him.

"All we wanted was your horse," Myrta explained, more defiant than contrite.

"What in the hell did you want my horse for?"

"He ain't got none," said Myrta. "Powers and Wallace took all of them—he ain't got no horse!"

Taterleg sat regarding Wes severely, as if undecided how far he was going to carry his punishment, keeping his gun trained on him while he figured it out.

It all pointed to Beal Twitchell's guilt, he decided; Wes was probably

more a victim of his father's ruthlessness than anything else.

"You was takin' a long chance to git one, kid," he said at last. Then he flipped to the ground suddenly and lightly as a bird. "You can put 'em down, kid."

Taterleg picked up the gun Wes had dropped, for he distrusted Myrta, who had her eyes on it, and a hard, hillbilly look in her face. She was desperate in her determination to protect her lover.

"You wanted a horse, did you, kid?" said Taterleg. "Well, I don't reckon any young feller in a thousand miles of here needs one worse than you do right now. There's a gang of cowmen ridin' the range back there lookin' for you, every one of them with a slip-knot ready for your neck."

He handed young Twitchell's gun back to him, pulled the reins over the horse's head and placed them in his hand.

"Here's your horse," he said. "But you might 'a' asked me for him decent."

A slow color rose in young Twitchell's pale and anxious face. While he stood indecisive on what to do or say, Taterleg turned sharply, a grinding of gravel under his heel.

"I'm goin' to git me a drink, Myrta," he announced.

Taterleg withdrew himself from sight behind the willows at the spring, where he waited. It was not more than a minute until Wes Twitchell passed down the cañon, riding unwisely hard, in Taterleg's opinion, for a man with so much need of a horse ahead of him.

Myrta came down the path, her arms spread like a setting hen just off the nest. She rushed up to Taterleg, in-folded him in her panting embrace, and gave him a tremendous, breath-taking kiss. It came so suddenly, it was applied

so ardently, that Taterleg was—winded. It was the biggest kiss he ever had encountered, and he thought it was just exactly as if somebody had slapped him in the mouth with a pancake.

Myrta pushed him back out of the embrace and stood holding him, hands on his shoulders, her head a little to one side as if admiring him, her face glowing, tears on her hot cheeks.

"JERRY, you're the sweetest little man!" she said.

"Yes, and I'd 'a' been a purty-lookin' mess in a minute if I hadn't suspicioned somebody was about to bore me in the spine of the back!"

"I wouldn't 'a' let him hurt you, Jerry. I wouldn't even let him flash his gun if I could 'a' got a-hold of yours, but I didn't know you had that kind of lightnin' in your arm. I never saw a man that could sling a gun like you."

"Ma'am, I'm a snail when it comes to draggin' out a gun, compared to the man that learnt me all he could learn a simple-minded feller like me. I hope the kid's got sense enough to use that horse right. The way he started, he'll wear the horse out a long time before he comes in sight of a railroad train."

"It'll take him to Buffalo," she said, speculatively. She drew a long breath, her eyes flooding with sudden tears. "I'd lay my life down for that kid, Jerry. I guess you know that."

"It gits me, with his old man hirin' gun-slingers to shoot up your fam'ly."

"Wes wasn't to blame for that," she said softly; a little proudly, he believed.

"Where's your pa?" Taterleg inquired, not altogether easy over the prospect of meeting the old man after his work of rounding up rustlers.

"He's gone. He drove off every head of stock on the place the day after

you went north with Ches. He got to thinkin' about it after you left. He said you acted like a detective."

"I don't know how a detective acts," Taterleg said, "but if I act like one I wish somebody 'd take me out behind the haystack and shoot me."

"Honest, Jerry—ain't you a detective?"

"I'd just as lieve, ma'am, you'd ask me if I ever robbed a grave."

Myrta was hard to convince that he was not a detective, hired by Brady and the other nesters to hunt the rustlers down. Taterleg was able to do it only at the expense of much ardent protestation and considerable sweat, for it made his lard hot to be charged with being an underhanded and sneak-footed man, which was how he regarded all detectives. Myrta appeared to consider detecting a romantic profession, nothing to a man's discredit.

"I ain't aimin' to pry into anybody's business," Taterleg said, when the question of his being a detective was finally out of the way, "but I hope your pa didn't go north."

"They'll never ketch him," Myrta declared.

"I hope they don't."

"He knows the country better than any cowman, and he's got a good start. They can't do nothing to a man, anyhow, for drivin' off his own cattle. He's got a right to drive 'em any place he wants to."

"Yes, I reckon he has, but them cowmen they're feelin' mighty peevish. Well, I guess I'd better be hoofin' it along home. You ain't seen anything of a long-necked muckledun horse roamin' around up here, have you, Myrta?"

"Do you reckon me and Wes'd 'a' let any kind of a horse get past us?"

"No, I don't reckon you would.

That old sooner of a Wallace musta put a bullet between the old feller's eyes."

"Or else he drove him off along with the others, Jerry. Come on in, honey—don't be in such a rush to peg along home. Let me get you some breakfast, and you can tell me all about the doin's up there last night."

"Well, if you say so, Myrta," Taterleg agreed heartily enough, for he was so hungry his insides were sticking to his backbone.

IN the course of the talk with which he seasoned his breakfast, the hobble on Taterleg's tongue worked loose, and he let it out that Beal Twitchell had been killed in the cowmen's camp last night. He regretted the slip, but had wisdom enough to maneuver all suspicion away from himself, doubtful how Myrta was going to take it.

Myrta sat across the table from him, the empty dishes of his big breakfast between them. She was resting her chin in her hand, elbow on the table, staring with a far-away look in her big mule eyes, as if she sought among those distant cowmen the face of the one who had laid Beal Twitchell low. She drew a long breath and let it go with a troubled sigh.

"Well, he got what was comin' to him a long time," she said, greatly to Taterleg's relief. "Pa woulda killed him a good while ago if it hadn't been for me, and I only kep' him from doin' it on account of Wes."

"I didn't think you'd have much love for that old feller, bringin' them Texas shooters here to kill off your fam'ly and us nesters."

"He brought 'em here mainly to kill pa," Myrta said, wearily. "All that front he made about the nesters was

just pawin' dust to hide his own devilment. He wanted pa killed because pa knew too much about his doin's."

"That's what Brady said, but I took it the other way around. I told him I believed somebody's foot slipped in that shootin'. It had me guessin', and I'm still at it."

Myrta removed the prop from under her round chin, drew her gaze back from its long exploration among the shadows of her fancy, and turned to her guest with another of those deep-breasted sighs.

"I'll tell you about it, Jerry," she said.

It was a long and clarifying conference they held across the table over the empty plates. The forenoon was half gone when Taterleg took leave of Myrta at the little lop-sided gate where Wes Twitchell had crouched behind the massed morning-glory vines waiting his chance to get a horse. Their last words were of Beal Twitchell, lying dead in the cowmen's camp.

"You don't know who killed him, Jerry?" Myrta asked, a little troubled, it seemed, as if she sought the information to quiet her last doubts.

"I didn't see the feller's face," Taterleg replied.

CHAPTER XXI.

NEWS FROM A LADY.

"SO I give him the horse. Not so much on his account, or Myrta's, as his mother's. She wouldn't have had anybody left, with the old man killed. I don't owe her anything now. She tried me, and she tried me hard, when she come out there on their veranda beggin' me to tell her what we wanted Beal for, yisterday. She called me Mr. Austin."

That was Taterleg's report of the incident when he arrived home, his feet sore, his boots dusty, from his long walk down from Dolson's. Brady had just arrived from an expedition to the back range, whither he had led a company of nesters, alarmed over his partner's long absence. They had gone to take it out of the cowmen's hides if it turned out they had played a stacked deck against Taterleg.

Instead, they had met a band of tame and chastened cowmen, coming out with Beal Twitchell's body; a band of cowmen who respected nesters as nesters never had been esteemed on that range before.

"Well, it was your horse," said Taterleg, with a dusty grin. "Maybe that made the givin' away easier. But I'll make him good, Austin."

"If you say anything more about that," Brady threatened, sternly, "I'll stand you in the door and kick you a mile!"

"Then you and me we're both quits with old lady Twitchell," Taterleg said. "You and me, pardner, we can sleep peaceful. I think I'll go out and chase a hen up a plank and see if I can get me a egg or two. That walk down here sure put a edge on my gizzard."

"Go ahead; I'll make a fire. I didn't even have any breakfast."

Over their late meal Taterleg told, in his own way, what he had heard from Myrta Dolson that morning concerning the entanglement of trickery which involved her own father, Beal Twitchell, and his son.

"You had him down right, Austin; old Beal was busted."

"Banker at Buffalo told me; nothing to my credit," said Brady.

"He'd 'frauded them slick bankers on them loans, Austin. Shifted cattle that was already plastered, and bor-

rowed on 'em as much as three or four times. He couldn't ship a head regularly, without runnin' the chance of goin' to the pen. What do you think of a cowman that'd do a dirty trick like that?"

"I'd think almost anything you could name of a cowman. What else did Myrta tell you?"

"THE old cuss started by sendin' Wes off north, drivin' little bunches to sell to cowmen that was restockin' their ranges after the hard winters. Wes knew it was crooked, but he wanted to help the old man out. Well, before they'd made many drives Powers and that slab-sided old feller they called Wallace—I don't know yet whether that's his first name or his last—got onto the scheme.

"Them two smart fellers begun to pick up cows off of the range themselves and drive 'em along. Wes couldn't say anything, because they had it on him. Old man Dolson got on to it next, and he begun to chip in a few head he picked up, industrious, here and there. But old Dolson he wasn't keen for rustlin' around and huntin' up wanderin' cows. Too much like work. So he went to Twitchell and told him he had to have a split on every head he sold, or he'd blow up the whole works. Damn old crook! Dolson had been in the pen back in Missouri for stealin' hogs, Myrta told me."

"Did she say how long they've been carryin' on that pretty little three-cornered business?"

"More than a year. Old man Dolson got to ridin' Twitchell so hard this spring that the colonel hired them Texas gunners to shoot him off. Myrta says she didn't know anything about the rustlin' business till it was

too late to stop it, then she had to be either with 'em or ag'in' 'em. So she lined up and helped all she could, for the sake of Wes. But she was gittin' uneasy; she was ready to quit. It was her that planned that drive to be the last one. Wes was goin' to collect the money and hit it up for Mexico, pickin' her up on the way. Wasn't that a hell of a note?"

"Goin' to quit the old man cold? Well, he deserved it."

"The old crook kep' his mortgage interest paid up out of his crooked sales, just like you said he was doin'. He stood the bankers off that way, but where he expected to come out in the end beats me. There wasn't any way out. Myrta says Wes never stole a head of cattle in his life, but I don't know him as well as she does; I've got my doubts. Wallace is an old-time rustler; used to rustle down in the Cherokee Nation, Myrta says. Proud as pitch of his record, because he ain't never been in the pen. They was all a-straddle of that old cow colonel's neck."

"Well, I guess his case is closed," Brady said. "You sure have got the respect of the cowmen around here; they'll pull clear over to the side of the road when they see you comin'."

"I'd hate like sin to have a name like that," Taterleg said regretfully.

While they were sitting at ease, smoking their after-dinner pipes, one of the neighbor boys came over to report that Taterleg's claybank horse was in the livery barn at Buffalo. A cowboy had found him mooning around in the hills.

"Darned old sooner!" said Taterleg. "Layin' down on a man the way that horse laid down on me! If he was able to run away from them fellers after I left him, he was able to run away from 'em with me on him. Blame

his old leather neck! Well, I'll go over after him to-morrow. To-night, I'm goin' to my bed to sleep."

TATERLEG stayed the night in Buffalo. It was toward noon when he arrived home with his long-necked, evangelical horse in tow, the stirrups tied across the seat of the saddle. He was in high spirits, his face glowing like a crab apple, when he put his feet under the table to regale himself after his long ride.

"You look as if you'd found a dollar bill," said Brady.

"I feel like it," Taterleg agreed, heartily. "You remember that sheepman that wanted to sell out to me last spring?"

"The one they burned out? Yes, I remember him."

"Met him over in town yisterday afternoon. Still wanted to sell, so I took him up."

"Fine business! You got them right, I know."

"Five dollars a head, all round, him to reserve the lambs. I paid him five hundred down, balance on delivery. He's startin' over with the band to-day."

Brady shook hands with his shrewd partner across the dishes.

"Sheepman, welcome to our community!"

"Yes, sir, and I'll tell you something else." Taterleg eyed his partner sideways, blushing like a bridegroom. "You remember that girl I was tellin' you about—the one that went to Lander?"

"The one that married a barber? Yes, I recall your speakin' of her now and then."

"I done that girl wrong," Taterleg confessed, contritely. "She never married no barber."

"So?" said Brady, all alive with interest. "Then she isn't married, after all?"

"She was married, yes. But he wasn't a barber. He was a drug store man."

"Well," said Brady, crestfallen as if Nettie Morrison's unfaithfulness touched him personally, "I don't see where that helps your case any."

"I got a letter from her, sent on by that sheepman I wintered with. She's a widdier woman now."

"The hell she is? But I don't know whether I ought to congratulate you or not."

"Yeah," said Taterleg, nodding gravely. "She's a widdier woman now. He'd been drinkin' one night and he spread rat poison on a cracker and et it. He thought it was deviled ham."

"Damn' fool!"

"Wasn't he? So Nettie set down and wrote me a letter. She said she hadn't been married to that man two days till she found out she'd made a mistake."

"They all think that way, old feller."

"Maybe. I don't know so much about 'em. Anyhow, she said if I'd forgive her she wanted to come on and try to live it down."

"Now, I don't know about that," Brady said doubtfully. "What are you going to tell her?"

"I've already told her," Taterleg replied, somewhat defiantly. "I wired her a telegram. I said, 'Nettie, as long as he wasn't a barber I forgive you.' That's what I said. Then I wrote her a letter and told her to come on."

MAYBE you were right," Brady sighed.

"That feller's pardner in the drug store give her fifteen hundred dollars, cash money, for her share in

the business. I can use that money on them sheep."

"Not so bad," Brady agreed.

"No, chance it she don't take up with a brakeman or somebody on the way out here and marry off on me ag'in," Taterleg speculated. "If she does, I'm through with her."

"It would be about time," said Brady, with his broad, good-natured grin.

His dinner finished, Taterleg drew a chair to the window, where he settled down with a comfortable sigh, loaded his pipe, and trailed off in dreams of Nettie Morrison and sheep. Brady was soon nose-deep in the papers which Taterleg had brought

from the distant post office. A long time they sat so, not a word between them. At last Taterleg started up with a jump.

"Hell!" said he. "That's my luck—that's just my dang-fool luck!"

"What's that?" Brady asked, alarmed over his partner's sudden agitation. "Did you overlook something? Is she going to—"

"No, it ain't her," Taterleg assured him. "It's that feller Wallace. I just remembered. The sheriff told me they caught him and hung him. And I never found out whether Wallace was his first name or his last. And now, dang my luck, I ain't never goin' to know!"

THE END.



Rupees and Rubies

RUBIES are where you find them! If you don't believe it, go into the Burma hills. There, perhaps, you will find rubies. At any rate, you will find rubies if your luck stays with you, for around the village of Mogok are the richest ruby fields in the world.

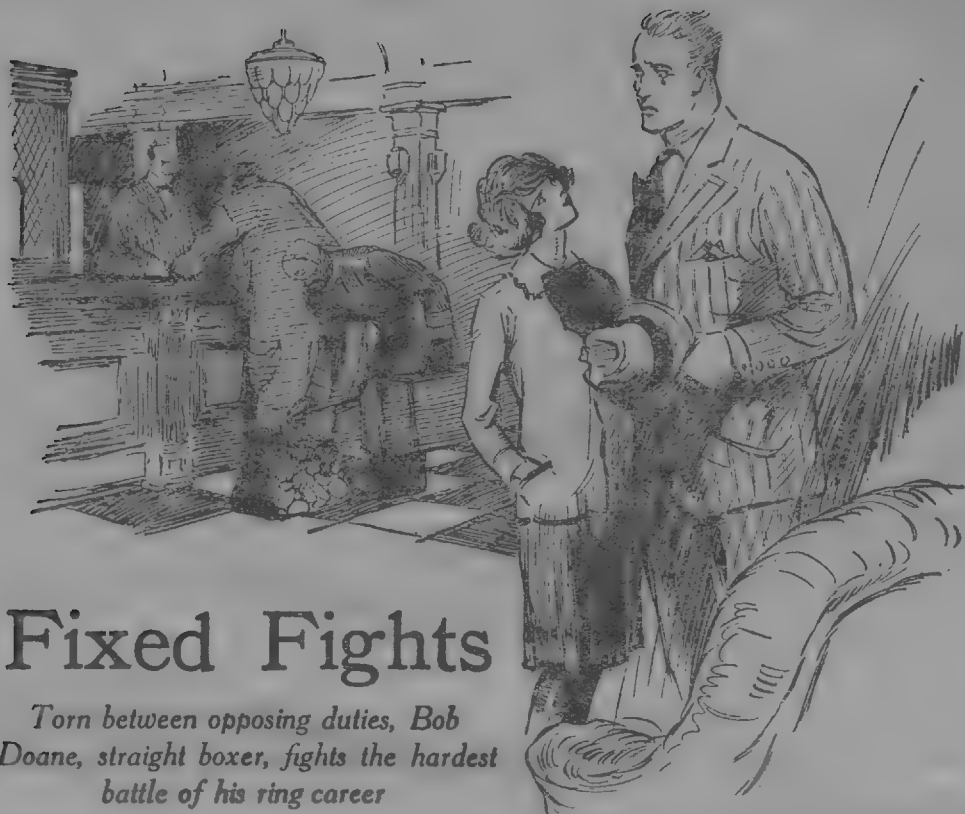
As has been said, rubies are where you find them. You may toil away for years and have little luck, while your neighbor may become immensely wealthy with one find. Not far from Mogok, four shareholders discovered a sapphire within six days after they started work. It was valued at 156,750 rupees, a rupee being worth about thirty-three cents.

The Peace Ruby, found in 1918 by the Burma Ruby Mines Co., Ltd., brought one hundred thousand dollars in the rough. Only a short time ago, a ruby four times as large as the Peace Ruby was discovered. It weighs fifty-seven carats and it is expected to sell for several times as much as the Peace Ruby.

A unique system of mining is in effect in the Burma hills. Mine operators must be licensed by the government. This license costs one hundred rupees monthly. It also requires that four coolies be employed at one rupee each daily with the further stipulation that one-third of the profits, if any, be divided among the coolies.

Because of the element of chance, even coolies may find themselves suddenly elevated to positions of affluence. One Maung-Oh at one time worked for the customary one rupee stipend. That was fifteen years ago. To-day he is known as the "Sapphire King of Burma," and he is one of the share-owners of the most recent big ruby discovery.

Harold J. Ashe.



Fixed Fights

Torn between opposing duties, Bob Doane, straight boxer, fights the hardest battle of his ring career

By JOHN GARRETSEE

She was more of a peach than he had dreamed from that glimpse in the arena

SINCE Society, with a capital S, stopped looking down her nose at prize fights, and ladies, without quotation marks, took to ringside seats, the slugging game has added to itself a new set of risks and possibilities. Ask Battling Bob Doane, if you don't believe it.

Back when Bob was first showing signs of the stuff that later made middleweight history he crawled through the ropes into the ring one night and fell in love at first sight. It was a knockout, and came near being the start of Bob's finish.

Bob was still in the pork and bean end of the game then. A part-timer at that. It was tough going and slow, holding down a stiff job in a garage

and training at night in the dingy little gym of the Eighth Ward Club, with a showing now and then in the neighborhood preliminaries.

Still, he had already picked up a small following ready to talk money whenever his red head and serious fighting mug showed up in the ring. One of them was Ted Whitaker, a fight fan with a wide acquaintanceship in Flowerville sporting circles. It was Ted who got him his first try-out at the Flowerville Club in one of the preliminaries to the much advertised Reilly-Mulligan bout.

That meant Bob's first real step up. In the boxing world the Flowerville Club was the hub of Flowerville city and county. There would be more than

one fight promoter there hunting likely raw material to add to his string of fighters. Bob's head was buzzing with this thought as he crawled through the ropes, straightened up and looked around.

And then it happened.

He looked straight into a pair of eyes. And for a long second Bob saw nothing else. He forgot everything else. Just stopped short and stared. His pulse kicked him like a short arm jab to the wind.

They were violet eyes. Bob learned that later. All he knew now was that they were the most amazing pair he had ever seen. And they were hovering in the aisle ahead of him a scant five feet above the floor. The owner of the eyes seemed as forgetful as Bob. She paused in the act of taking her seat. Her graceful little figure hung poised for an instant.

Then she dropped her gaze and slipped quietly into her chair. Bob stumbled to his corner and began kicking himself. What a bonehead! Staring at a high-hat society dame! Why the devil did women come to fights, anyhow?

BOB firmly put his mind on the business of the evening. The crowd was giving him and Mike Ragan, his opponent, a fairly polite hand, split about fifty-fifty. Bob grinned toward a roar of real enthusiasm from a small block of his friends shouting encouragement.

"Oh, you redhead!"

"Make 'em think it's the main bout!"

"Eat him up, Bob!"

These and other bits reached him above the hubbub. Ted Whitaker, his second, was pouring out last minute advice. The sweating, shirt-sleeved an-

nouncer was roaring through the megaphone.

But Bob couldn't keep his mind off the girl. He had never been hit that way before. Bob liked girls well enough, but hitherto he could take them or leave them alone. This one was different, and how! A force outside himself grabbed him by his competent chin and swung his stubborn head around in the direction of the pretty stranger.

She wasn't looking his way now. Her escort, an oldish fellow in a Tuxedo, was getting all the violet eyes had. She was certainly a peach, all right. A swell one too. Bob could tell by the clothes she wore and the way she wore them. Not all lit up like a cathedral, the way the cheap she-sports did it. And yet she didn't look dumb, like Bob's notion of most society dames.

Ted Whitaker had to nudge him to get him up for the referee's instructions. Bob didn't really come out of his daze till the gong rang. Then for the next few minutes he saw nothing but the plunging, dancing form of Mike Ragan, and his flashing gloves.

Yet, all the time that he was side-stepping around the ring feeling Mike out, he had a half conscious mental vision of two violet eyes fixed on him critically. He forgot the rest of the crowd, even his own bunch on their feet roaring advice.

But Ragan was troubling him. From the first lunge the big fellow had Bob guessing. Ragan, an out-of-town man, was a seasoned ring fighter who had never gone farther than the preliminaries. "Hooch" was the rumor that followed him to Flowerville and tried to explain him.

At any rate he was a bull-necked fellow, a scant inch shorter than Bob

and nine pounds heavier. And he knew how to box. He went at it with ease, precision, and an indulgent grin. That last was poison ivy to Bob. He kept his temper, however, boxed warily, avoiding infighting, letting Ragan keep the offensive.

The fellow's spectacular rushes and lightning punches lacked steam, Bob soon discovered. The first punch that got by his guard started like a pile-driver, but had no business in it, to speak of, when it landed on his cheek.

Bob's nerve began to pick up. By the middle of the round he was taking the offensive. Ragan let him have it. Confidence went to Bob's head like a slug of gin. He'd show her something. Suddenly, with a fresh burst of speed, he slipped past Ragan's left counter and got home with a vicious short arm right to the pit of the stomach.

Ragan dodged back with a grunt. His grin faded into the lines of a jagged hunk of flint. Before Bob could follow through, Ragan came back with a right counter that caught Bob on the shoulder, sending him spinning half-way across the ring to wind up against the ropes and sway groggily for an instant with his guard down. Ragan rushed, but instead of landing an easy knockout he fainted twice, giving Bob a chance to recover.

The round ended with a brief flurry of flashy but harmless sparring. Bob went to his corner not entirely dissatisfied with himself, though Ragan's last rush had set him to guessing again. Then he glanced at the girl. She was looking at him once more. As she caught his eye she turned hastily away. But Bob had experienced a fleeting smile in which he detected half pity, half derision. It hurt more than Ragan's worst punch. He slumped on his stool, hardly noticing at first the

hot hurried words of Ted Whitaker as he worked over him.

"IT'S a damned shame, but they jobbed ye, all right! It's a set-up!"

Ted finished and the meaning of his remarks penetrated Bob's brain at last. He snapped to attention.

"What's that? A fixed fight?" he demanded. "The devil you say!"

Ragan's ring performance began to have meaning—his showy boxing, the lightness of his actual blows, excepting the one he drove home when Bob's stomach punch routed out his temper.

"I picked up the dope from listenin' in on the newspaper guys here," Ted went on, jerking his head toward the press seats. "This Ragan's one o' these fancy prelim fighters that never goes up against a guy he ain't sure he can lick. He guarantees to string along with some pretty boxing for three rounds and then knock 'em out with a lot of fireworks. Don't try rushin' him again. You ain't got the chance of a tallow pup in hell. And if you get sore he'll half kill ye. Best you could do'd be to keep out his way an' make it a draw. My dope, though, would be to drop an' take the count next time he hits ye."

Bob's teeth set stubbornly.

"The devil I will! And have every wise guy in the place think I'm in on the frame-up? No, sir. Let him kill me if he can. Anybody that tries to pull a fixed fight on me won't get any of my help in the fixing."

But Bob was thinking of the girl. She was wise. She knew it was a fixed fight. That was what the split smile meant, half derision, half pity. They had brought him here to make a monkey out of him before this society dame and her kind. Kiddin' him, was she? He swallowed hard on his rage and did

some quick thinking before the gong sounded. Then he waited for Ragan to lead.

The big fellow grinned with satisfaction as he bored in and Bob side-stepped, at the same time keeping up a show of lively defense. He'd taught the youngster his lesson. Also the boy had apparently been tipped off and would now let the bout follow its prescribed course.

And Bob more than lived up to it. For swift action the fans had no kick coming. But it was a bloodless spectacle. Not a blow of any consequence landed either way, though the harmless slap of gloves on flesh was incessant.

Then, by the middle of the round, Ragan slowed down. He was visibly panting from the swift pace. Indulgence and lack of training, common to this class of fighter, were getting his wind. For a moment Bob humored him. Ragan was getting careless as well as winded.

Twice Bob fumbled an obvious opening, then fainted for Ragan's wind and went down before a mild cross-counter that caught him on the temple. At the count of five he raised himself on an elbow. Then the gong sounded and he dropped back limp, letting Ted Whitaker half drag him over to his corner.

But Bob Doane was not too groggy to glance in the girl's direction. Again she was looking at him, but not smiling now. There was anxious concern in her eyes that made Bob's heart jump.

Ted was giving advice.

"Say, listen. If you're goin' to lie down on him, pick a punch that would at least put a kid to sleep. Anyhow, you don't need to let it look like a fake!"

But Bob was satisfied. It hadn't looked like a fake to the girl. He felt certain of that.

"I'm fixing this fight myself," he told Ted grimly.

WHEN the gong sounded for the last round he met Ragan with the look of a sleep walker. Ragan was contented. He prepared to make this final round a good fast show. A minute or so of cat-and-mouse stuff and then the crashing knock-out! That was the program Bob was expecting and watching for alertly under his mask of grogginess.

Three times he deliberately let Ragan's easy punches past his guard, once to the cheek and twice to the chest. Each time he reeled away on seemingly failing legs. Then, almost subconsciously, he sensed the end from a sudden change in Ragan's eyes. Bob ducked and at the same instant the big fellow struck with all the force of his bull's body.

The blow had been meant for the point of Bob's jaw. It grazed his scalp instead. But Bob dropped as if it had been an overhand blow from an ax. Ragan stood away negligently. Bob lay still with closed eyes till the count of seven. Then he suddenly whirled over on his face. His knees snapped up under him and he sprang to his feet like a jack-in-the-box.

As he came up he shot his right to the pit of Ragan's stomach and clinched briefly. Before he broke away he landed two more short-arm jabs on that vulnerable organ. Ragan wrenched from him with a grunt of pain and countered with a right that reached Bob's chest as per schedule, but lacked steam.

Then Bob rushed him with a right feint at the stomach again. Ragan involuntarily dropped his guard and was lost. Bob drove over it with a vicious left that had behind it all of his one

hundred and sixty pounds. It reached the point of the big fellow's jaw.

The knock-out of Ragan proved quite as satisfactory to the audience as the planned ending. But Bob's bow of acknowledgment to their roar of approval was directed at one of them only.

On the face of the girl was a broad boyish grin. She was frantically waving a bright chiffon handkerchief. With sudden boldness Bob grinned back and wiggled his damp glove in salute.

Then he climbed out of the ring feeling as though he had won a world championship.

"And, by gosh, she gave me the nerve to do it!" he thought. "She may be a swell, but she's a good sport, and some little peach! Why the devil wasn't I born rich instead of just handy with the mitts?"

Bob began to suffer swift reaction. By the time he'd had his shower he was low in spirits. He'd probably never see her again. Hadn't any business to think about her. And that was that. He shrugged hopelessly and walked out.

In the passageway Joe Lafferty, a local fight manager, stepped up and slapped him on the shoulder.

"I was looking for you. Good work, boy!" he boomed heartily. "Say, listen. I only got a second now, gotta hop back to my seat. Going down to Philly at midnight, too. Gone a week. But I want to see you when I get back. How'd you like to sign up with me? Got any other plans?"

Bob warily hid the thrill that gave him, replying with more craftiness than truth:

"Thanks, Mr. Lafferty. I got nothing settled yet. Sure, I'd like to talk it over."

"Good! Look me up first of next week."

HIS big chance at last! Bob hurried away from the club, to be alone with his thoughts. But somehow his dreams of coming glory soured on him. He couldn't get that girl out of his mind. His good luck wouldn't mean anything in her young life even if she ever heard of it, which she wouldn't. Bob passed a low and restless night, and even the letter he found beside his plate in the morning failed to lift the cloud.

DEAR MR. DOANE:

I saw you in the ring to-night and like the way you handle yourself. I understand you aren't hooked up with a manager yet. Why not drop around to the Hotel Alton at eight to-morrow evening and have a little talk?

Yours truly,

THOMAS KANE.

Bob half remembered hearing the name of Thomas Kane somewhere. Apparently, from the letter, he was interested in fight management. He wasn't a local man. In case Bob failed to make a deal with Lafferty here might be a second chance.

So, at eight o'clock that evening, he walked into the lobby of the Hotel Alton to look up Kane. And he saw the girl again. She was standing near the desk, apparently waiting for some one she knew.

On second sight, she hit Bob harder than ever. He stopped so suddenly that the revolving door followed through, caught him in the back and nearly made him do obeisance face to floor at the lady's feet. He straightened up in time to get another and worse jolt. The gorgeous little creature was coming toward him! She was speaking to him! She was calling him by name!

"Good evening, Mr. Doane. I was waiting for you."

Bob's ears never heard music to match that. He saw her through a pink mist. And his tongue stalled absolutely.

"I'm Margie Kane," the music went on. "Father was delayed and asked me to meet you."

Somehow Bob found himself grasping a soft but firm hand which was shaking his big paw boyishly. He heard a hoarse voice croak, "Pleased to meet you," and nearly jumped to find it was his own. His head was spinning, his heart was thumping. So she wasn't a society dame after all! Just a regular girl, a fight manager's kid—not out of his reach after all!

She was more of a peach even than he had dreamed from seeing her in the arena. What luck he hadn't actually signed up with Lafferty! He was being led to a divan in the corner meantime. Everybody in the lobby must have noticed how big his feet were and what a hell of a racket they made.

"I want to tell you how wonderful I thought you were last night," she was running on. It wasn't so hard to listen now that he was over the first jolt. "For once dad was wrong. He said it was a fixed fight, just a set-up to amuse the crowd while they were waiting for the main bout. He knows Ragan, and told me he never fought nowadays except with green fighters he was sure he could whip."

"Sure, I know," Bob told her with a grin, kicking his tongue loose at last. "And you thought I knew and had just been paid to stand up and be knocked out? You was kind of sorry for me on account of the punching you thought he was going to give me, and kind of disgusted with me for standing for it, now wasn't you?"

Margie Kane looked surprised.

"How did you guess it?"

"Oh, I knew from the way you looked at me at the end of the first round."

She seemed even more surprised now and blushed a little. She didn't look any the worse for that.

"You're kidding me now," she accused. "You didn't notice me in all that crowd."

"I sure did. I—" Bob began and stopped suddenly, his face red as his hair. He just missed telling her he hadn't noticed much of anything else.

"TELL me about yourself," she put in hastily. "It's all pretty new to me, this boxing game, and all very exciting. You see, I've just finished school. I'd been away in school ever since mother died. Now that father is taking up fight managing again I like to go around with him and know about his business. I'm his secretary, you see. And, besides, I sort of have a claim on you. I had a hunch you were a real fighter when you came in the ring."

She giggled like a little girl finding a new toy. More music!

"Well, there isn't a lot to tell about me," Bob assured her. "My mother died too, and I never really had a dad. He died when I was a little kid. Mom managed to keep me in school though. She was pretty strict, kind of old-fashioned, didn't think much of the fight game. But I got interested in boxing while I was in high school. I went to work in a garage when I got through. After mom died I began sparring a little."

An hour slipped by before Kane appeared on the scene and found his daughter and the young fighter apparently very well acquainted and not at all relieved to see him.

Bob had hardly given Margie's escort a glance at the fight the night before. He had rather disliked him then. He didn't like him any better now that he knew he was Margie's father. How could such a father have such a daughter, he wondered! Kane was a big fellow with a narrow, mean face, and close set, crafty eyes. His complexion was the mottled purple of high, but not dry living, and his paunchy, bloated body was in keeping with it.

As Kane talked, Bob was trying to remember what he had heard about him. When he looked at Kane he was all wise caution, not going to commit himself yet. Then when he glanced at Margie he was ready to sign on the dotted line. But after all, when it came to a show-down he had agreed to talk to Joe Lafferty before deciding anything.

"I'll let you know next week," Bob said finally. "I promised to talk over a proposition with another man, and I couldn't say 'yes' to you without seeing him first."

"Fair enough," Kane granted. But the violet eyes looked frankly disappointed.

Later that evening he ran across Ted Whitaker at the Eighth Ward Club.

"Know anything about a fight manager named Tom Kane?" Bob asked him.

"Sure. Know a plenty. He's no good. He's a fight fixer. Old George Long used to know him in Pittsburgh. George an' me met him on the street the other day. George recognized him an' gave me an earful. Seems this Kane got put out of business about ten years ago for steerin' a crooked fight. He'd cleaned up quite a piece of change though, an' he's been bummin' around the country ever since pickin' up quite

a lot of dough bettin' on fights. Now, they tell me, his girl's through school an' he wants to settle down and get into the managin' game again. The girl's a good looker, I understand, an' he's usin' her as a come-on to line up young pugs that he wants to put on his string. He's fittin' up a gym over in Ball Street. He—"

But suddenly Bob Doane wasn't listening. Involuntarily his fists clenched, and at the glare of his eyes Ted stopped in surprise.

"What's the matter?" he exclaimed.

Bob pulled a severe coughing spell. No good in telling Ted what was really the matter.

"Been catching cold, I guess," Bob wheezed after a moment. "Better beat it for the hay. Good night."

Bob went miserably out and home. So that was that. Lucky he hadn't committed himself to Kane before he found out about him! As for the girl, he'd been a mush-head. He'd take good pains not to run into her again.

But it wasn't so easy. She troubled his dreams again and again that night. She haunted him all the next day and into the following evening, when he saw her in the flesh for the third time. There was a minor bout on at the Eighth Ward Club. Bob went as a spectator. And in the vestibule he ran into Margie standing with her father and Tim Brady, another young aspirant for ring honors.

Margie smiled at Bob, looked as though she expected him to join their group. But he passed on with a constrained greeting. He glanced back a moment later and saw her talking animatedly with Brady.

"More 'come-on' stuff!" he grunted and presently slipped out and went home. He didn't care for the fight after all. Before he went to bed he wrote a

note to Kane definitely refusing his offer. That was that!

BUT Bob wasn't cured. He simply couldn't stay away from Margie Kane's neighborhood. It was not till the close of his Saturday half day's work, however, that he saw her again. She was coming out of the Alton, just as he loitered abreast of it on the other side of the street. He dodged into a doorway, but not quickly enough. She stopped and waved gayly. She obviously expected him to cross to her. Bob did, rather sheepishly.

"I wanted to tell you how sorry I was you couldn't take dad's offer," she said.

"Well, you see how it was," he mumbled lamely.

"Of course. You did the only square thing. I'd have been ashamed of you if you'd gone back on your word. I knew from the way you stood up to that Ragan when you knew it was supposed to be a fixed fight that you'd hate anything that wasn't square as much as I do."

Bob was lost again. Whatever this girl's father might be, he knew she was on the square.

"I'm sorry, too, that I couldn't tie up with your father," he stammered, "because I—well—I think we'd work well together—ah—I mean, you said you were his secretary. Uh—I hope I see you once in awhile just the same."

"Why, I hope so," she said. "I hope you'll get along well. I'll be interested to know how you're doing."

"Then we'll be friends?" he asked a little more boldly.

"Why, yes, of course," she agreed. "I haven't many friends in town yet."

"Well," Bob went on with a finality of boldness, "how about lunch?"

He left Margie at eleven thirty that

night. The luncheon had run into a *matinée* at the movies, dinner and dancing.

That was the beginning of a curious mixed year for Bob Doane; a year of gruelling training under Joe Lafferty; a year of minor victories and defeats, with the victories gradually taking the lead; a steadily growing following; and a year of Margie Kane.

After that first afternoon and evening with her, Bob Doane no longer tried to hide from himself the fact that he was in love with Margie. He refrained from letting himself speak, however, till he was definitely on his feet and able to support a wife.

It wasn't smooth going by any means. To begin with, Tom Kane promptly soured on Bob when he found he couldn't do business with him. Kane didn't forbid Margie to see Bob; he knew his independent-minded daughter too well ever to say too much against Doane. But Margie was a devoted daughter, blind to her father's faults. Bob was more and more convinced, as time went on, that she was ignorant of his past record, as well as some of his present performances.

But gradually, as Kane's fight interests developed, he kept his daughter so busy that she found less and less time for Bob. And finally, when Bob got into the contest for the middleweight championship of Flowerville County, a definite sense of strain arose between them.

Up to now Bob Doane had not met one of Kane's fighters in the ring. But Kane's star man, Tim Brady, won the county belt just about the time Bob Doane's manager considered him ready to go after major trophies. Brady now had his eye on the State championship. Joe Lafferty, Bob's manager, proposed to nip that ambition.

"Here's your chance, son," he told Bob. "And it's our chance to put this crook, Kane, out of business, too. He's putting all he's got behind this Brady. If Brady loses the try for State champ's belt, Kane is through, or I'm a Chinaman. Brady, or you either, can lick Conover, the present State champ, easy. Conover is a has-been and knows it. He's been mighty easy about taking on men his size for a good two years back. So here's where you come in. You're the logical runner-up for the county championship. And if we challenge Brady right now before he gets a chance at Conover, he'll have to take you, and whichever of you wins, can go after Conover next and compete for the State championship."

Bob for once was uneasy.

"Well, let me think it over a little," he demurred.

LAFFERTY eyed him shrewdly.

"Look here, boy," he said.

"Your private affairs ain't any of my damn business, except—well, I hate to see you doin' anything to queer our game. Now you can just tell me this is none o' my business and give me a sock in the beezer to bind the bargain, if you want to. But the fact is, I've heard a little gossip going around among the boys about your runnin' with Kane's girl. I know you're on the square. I'm just tellin' you what the boys are sayin'. One bird I won't name dropped it to me that this girl is makin' a sucker out o' you and figgerin' to get you to shift management to her old man."

"What?" Bob roared. "The rotten liar!"

"Sure. I know," Lafferty put in hastily. "Hold your horses, boy. I told him he was just that an' worse. But the point is, if you go on bein' seen

with this girl, it's goin' to make more talk. If you go to challengin' one of Kane's men an' still keep chummy with the girl, it's goin' to be said that one of Kane's fixed fights is on. Get me?"

For a moment Bob was too red-hot mad to speak. He stood glaring at his manager, his fists clenched. At length he turned away abruptly.

"I'll talk to you later!" he hurled over his shoulder.

Bob went straight to Margie Kane. Margie was more than usually cool and distraught. He wondered if she, too, had been hearing the gossip. He led her to a lounge seat in a corner of the hotel lobby and dropped down beside her, uncertain how to begin.

"Lafferty wants me to challenge Brady," he blurted at last.

She regarded him calmly.

"That's interesting," she admitted. "I've been expecting that. Of course you'll do it."

"Why, that's just what I came to see you about. I wanted to ask you what I'd better do, how you'd feel about it."

Again she gave him the raised eyebrows, a little more so this time.

"Why, Bob, of course I want you to do what you think best. I haven't anything to do about it. Why do you ask me?"

That got him.

"You know darn well why I'm asking you," he told her. "We've been good friends. I don't want to do anything that will hurt our friendship."

She stirred uneasily.

"What do you want me to do, go back to dad, tell you to go ahead and whip Brady? I can see what you're driving at, Bob Doane. You're probably right. It won't do for us to be seen around together any more, I'm afraid. That's quite all right."

She arose pointedly. Bob jumped up in a panic.

"Aw, Margie, listen. You know how much I care. I'm crazy about you. I didn't mean to tell you till I got square on my feet, till I won a real good fight like this one. Margie, you know you love me, girl. Tell me. We don't need to let anybody know till we're ready."

The young woman grew unreasonably furious.

"Don't talk nonsense!" she snapped. "We're on different sides of the fence and that's the end of it. And if you think I'd have any secret, underhand engagement with you, you're grandly mistaken. If I ever am so unlucky as to fall in love with you, Bob Doane, I'll tell you about it right out in public."

She went away from there, though the word "went" puts it mildly.

An hour later, Bob Doane marched into the presence of Joe Lafferty.

"That Brady challenge is all right with me," he said grimly.

The night of the Brady fight, Lafferty came to Bob in his dressing room, gloating in his eyes.

"We got him sewed up right," he told Bob. "I've just been gettin' the inside dope. Kane's put up all the money he has left on Brady at two to one and all he could borrow from his friends. Even got his watch and his girl's jewelry hocked, they tell me. If he wins, he'll have enough to finance the State fight. And, if he wins that, he'll be on Easy Street; but"—Lafferty paused to gloat—"but here's where we wipe him out, for you're goin' to win now sure as the devil."

HE slapped Bob on the back. Bob winced and pretended to share his enthusiasm, but he was gripped by a sudden inward chill. So he was going to smash the girl who

meant more to him than all the championship belts in the world! He saw a vision of her working to support a ruined drunkard of a father. And, of course, he could do nothing to help her. She had turned him down cold. Her scornful words rang in his ears now: "If I ever am so unlucky as to fall in love with you, Bob Doane, I'll tell you about it right out in public."

Nothing he could do about it? There was! The thought nearly bowled him over. He must not whip Brady. He'd fix the fight!

He was still in a daze when he went into the ring. It seemed vaguely like his first entry into that same ring a year before. Only this time he did not look into the face of Margie Kane as he crawled through the ropes. Margie was not present.

He made sure of this while the announcer was talking, searching the arena row by row. Poor little kid, he thought, this bout meant so much to her that she hadn't the nerve to watch it! Well, he was glad she wasn't there to see what he was going to do.

And then the fight was on. Again he was reminded of that other fixed fight a year ago. To-night he was going to follow the tactics he had been advised to follow then.

He was relieved to find at the outset that he and Brady were not so unevenly matched as he had been led to believe. It would be like Kane to inspire reports that would lengthen the odds against his man and increase his possible clean-up. But that made Bob's job of throwing the fight all the easier.

From the start he let Brady have the offensive, giving way with a good show of defense and coming to a clinch when Brady rushed him too hard. Brady pressed closer as he gained confidence from these tactics. Toward the

end of the round, Bob made a brief counter-attack, hammering Brady into the ropes with a swift right to the wind, followed by a left to his cheekbone. Brady clinched and landed a short-arm jab just under Bob's guard and well below the belt.

"Foul! Foul!" came scattering cries from the ringside seats. Then the gong sounded the end of the round. And at the same time, he caught sight of Tom Kane's face across the ropes—a strained, anxious face. And in that glance of Bob's, the dissolute visage seemed to melt and dissolve into the pale worried countenance of Margie. Bob's rage chilled.

"Was that a foul?" Lafferty demanded.

"No. It just seemed it," Bob lied doggedly, but he knew the referee had seen it. Then, to his amazement, the referee, in response to a general protest, ruled no foul. According to his secret plan, Bob should have been content that the official had played into his hands. Instead he forgot everything but the evidence that Kane was up to his old tricks of fight-fixing.

Bob flung himself into the next round in a blind fury. The sudden change startled Brady who retreated to the ropes under a hail of blows. There Bob put all he had into a high right for the jaw.

But his rage had made him careless. Brady blocked the blow with his glove and countered with a jab in Bob's solar plexus that sent him staggering back with a severe pain. Brady followed, raining blows, right and left. In the center of the ring, however, Bob recovered and put up a defense that sent his backers roaring with approval. Four times in succession he slipped past Brady's lunging blows and three times reached his opponent's face with shat-

tering left counters. The round ended with Bob punching Brady around the ring.

Just before the gong sounded he shot a swift right over Brady's guard for the point of the jaw. But even in that instant when his fist started on its deadly course, Bob seemed again to see Margie's face. It was as though sudden paralysis had seized his arm. The blow landed with half its initial steam. Brady's head snapped back, but he kept his feet and went into a clinch that finished the round.

BOB DOANE'S fury was spent. He sank apathetically on his stool, thinking coolly now. He had Brady on the run. That was clear.

"Keep cool now and you've got him in two more rounds," Lafferty whispered.

The third round was an anticlimax. Brady was fighting warily, sparing his waning strength and letting Bob have the offensive. But Bob made little use of it. He was fighting a double battle. While he sparred harmlessly with Brady like a man in a dream, he was carrying on a fierce inner struggle with himself. Every drop of sporting blood in him was battling against his purpose to sacrifice himself for the girl.

But he began the fourth round with his mind made up. The girl had won. Brady made it easier by starting the round with a renewed burst of speed, forcing Bob around the ring under a hail of smashing blows. The finish would be natural-appearing enough. He met the other's rushes with a show of resistance and held him off till the middle of the round. Then, twice in succession, he deliberately let staggering blows past his guard.

He reeled back from the second with an exaggerated show of weakening,

dropping his guard as if involuntarily. Now was Brady's chance. Bob held his breath and waited for the end.

But Brady, now perfectly confident of victory, took his time about it with a cynical show of giving his opponent a chance to recover. The arena was hushed with expectancy. Then at that critical instant a voice from a far corner shot through the silence, the clear, half-hysterical voice of a woman.

"Wake up, Bob! You've got him yet! Hit him! Hit him!"

The voice was Margie's. Past the grinning face of Brady Bob saw in a far corner of the arena, her violet eyes fixed on his, an unmistakable meaning in them now. She wanted him to win! Her parting words flashed again into his mind: "If I ever am so unlucky as to fall in love with you, Bob Doane, I'll tell you about it in public."

She was telling him now! And in the instant of that realization, Bob struck with all his exultant young strength, straight to the point of the grinning Brady's jaw. Brady's arms dropped limp. His grin gave way to a look of pained amazement. Then his knees seemed to melt under him and he sprawled inert on the canvas.

Bob stood over him until the ref-

eree's count of ten found him still lying motionless. But Bob was not looking at his fallen foe. His gaze was holding the tense white face of Margie Kane.

At the count of ten, Margie turned and began working her way hurriedly toward the exit. A moment Bob stared at her retreating back, then hurling aside a knot of tumultuous admirers, he threw his bathrobe around him, leaped over the ropes and started in pursuit.

Well, that's that.

Bob Doane sometimes assures Mrs. Doane these days that he knows she never intended to run any further than the curb where he caught her, just as she was making a bluff at hailing a taxi. To this she scornfully retorts that he took an unfair advantage of her by not stopping to dress; that she never expected to see him again and only gave in to avoid being arrested for fighting on a public street with a crazy man in a bathrobe.

But at any rate, even old Tom Kane, whose spirit was crushed by the Brady fiasco, seemed satisfied with the outcome when his new son-in-law got him a quiet job in a garage where he'd never be tempted to fix another fight.

THE END.

A Famous Stove

JOSEPHINE MILLER'S little square stove passed into history at the Battle of Gettysburg; her cottage, which stood in the line of fire and was honeycombed with bullets, is an object of great interest to visitors to the field. While the battle raged around her, eighteen-year-old Josephine stayed in her kitchen and baked bread for the hungry soldiers who passed her door until the flour barrel was empty. Between mixing and baking the loaves she cared, as best as she could, for the wounded and dying men who crawled to her house for shelter. She made no distinction; seventeen dead, both blue and gray, were carried out of her cottage when the battle ended.

Minna Irving.

The Men Who Make The Argosy

ROBERT CARSE

Author of "Man Size"

ROBERT CARSE was born in the heart of a Scotch Presbyterian family, in Riverdale-on-the-Hudson, not late after 1900. He was educated at the Hill School, where he served in the R. O. T. C. unit during the war, but not to even participate in the battles of Hoboken.

In the spring of 1920, while still trying to get into college, he shipped with the Pittsburgh Steamboat Company on the Great Lakes. That fall he went to deep water. There he ran out of New York for two years; to England, to Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, and then back again. He saw some swell gales, some swell bull-fights and some swell cognac brawls from all of which he recovered.

In the middle of the winter of 1921-1922, while homeward bound from Torre de Annunziata, Golfe de Napoli, his ship, the Steel Engineer, was caught in the famous New Year's Day gale, which lasted for five unbroken days and nights. The first night twelve ships went down within rocket sight and radio distance of his ship.

After that, he decided that the Mediterranean had been somewhat falsely advertised, and took to running the Pacific, Caribbean and South Atlantic. Hit a lot of the West Indian and Central American ports, and then a real, square-cornered full gale off Capo Bianco, in northern California.

After that he lay flat on his back for two months in the Marine Hospital in Port Townsend, Washington; to finally get a ship home to New York and make a rather permanent gesture at swallowing the anchor.

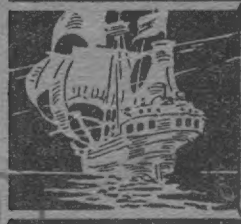
From there on, two years on the city staff of the New York Times, where he covered a number of good murders, mayhems and peoples. Wanderlust again, this time on the cushions to Florida, during the "gold rush." No gold, and home again, to pound pave-



ments in knee-deep slush and a thin topcoat. Found the job first with the City News Association, then the Newark Ledger, to at last give that up and go to work for Ivy Ledbetter Lee, serving as one of the men who wrote the Subway Sun.

When just about to push off again, he met the girl, and didn't. Since then he's been back to sea twice, as quartermaster and master-at-arms, but only for a month or so at a time, the rest of it flung boldly into the magazine business as a free-lance. He spent last winter in Bermuda, and is now in Cagnes-sur-mer, on the Riviera, trying to get a non-synthetic sunburn.

"Man Size" is his first story in ARGOSY, but he is planning many more to follow it.



Argonotes.

The Readers' Viewpoint



THIS is the best way to win new ARGOSY readers:

Grandenew, Wash.

I have been an ARGOSY fan for many years and have raised one fan. He is ten now, but has been reading ever since he started to school.

However, our opinions differ. I like *Mme. Storey*, *Western*, *Gillian Hazelline*; and he likes the impossible stories and wars. So perhaps your magazine is best just like it is.

Monday isn't blue Monday at our home, as that's the day ARGOSY comes.

MRS. ELLEN JOHNSON.

AND so does another short story contributor:

Jamestown, N. Y.

I have been a steady reader of the ARGOSY magazine for quite a long time, but I don't believe I have ever read a short story that I got more real enjoyment and hearty laughs out of than the story "Domino Craves a Thrill," by Charles Winfield Fessler.

Every one of your stories are fine, but this one sure does take first prize. Both my wife and I enjoyed that story to the fullest extent. Please try and have this comic author write more of this type of story for your readers. We like it!

L. D. LAY.

REASONS why the ARGOSY is popular—by one of our readers:

Chicago, Ill.

The story that made me an ARGOSY fan was "The Centaur of Navarro" published about six years ago.

My favorite stories and stories are so much in the majority that the others don't count. And that's that.

The popularity of the ARGOSY can be based as follows: The magazine covers are not surpassed by many higher-priced magazines and the type is clear and clean-cut, making the reading a pleasure for those with impaired sight. The ARGOSY is popular from an economical standpoint. The economy cannot be based alone on the dime spent for it. Many

of the serial stories are given to the readers before they are published in book form. Not many stories are in more than six parts, so that in six issues of ARGOSY the reader receives at least four complete stories, which if bought at regular book prices would mean an outlay of from four to six dollars, while the actual expenditure is only sixty cents.

I save the serial stories until complete, bind them in a cheap binder, and paste the magazine cover from the first installment of the story on the top cover of the binder, which makes a neat and handy book for future reading.

F. R. TIVAY.

BUT lest we become too self-satisfied, Mr. Stuart brings us back to earth with a thump:

New York City, N. Y.

I have been reading ARGOSY for the last eight years, and have always been most enthusiastic over it, until the last two or three weeks.

Where in the name of all that is holy did you ever dig up such drivel as "Backwater" and "The Law in Fraternity"? It is impossible to raise even the slightest interest in either of them. But for Fred MacIsaac's new offering, this week's (January 18), would be the prize "dud."

Those impossible "moon" stories are the limit. Give us more of Geo. F. Worts, Loring Brent and a Fred MacIsaac in every issue. I like your Western stories when they are good, and you used to publish some good ones.

I can remember the first time I bought an ARGOSY. It was eight years ago on the station at Philadelphia (I had just arrived from San Francisco, Cal.), and I thought it was "bully." Since then I have not missed an issue, but of late you seem to have deteriorated, or is it that my taste has changed?

SID STUART.

NOW for a few favorite authors:

Akron, Ohio.

"Maza of the Moon" and "Princess of the Atom" are very fine.

I like Fred MacIsaac, Murray Leinster, Eu-

place L. Adams, Theodore Roscoe, Otis Adelbert Kline and Ray Cummings. Keep ARGOSY as is and print a good Western; also more air stories.

R. W. FOGLE.

YOU see, after all it is a matter of opinion:

Worcester, Mass.

I have been wanting to write for a long time and never have till now, this week. When I read what a Mr. Robert W. Lamb had to say about our nice *Mme. Storey*, I was so mad! The idea, thinking them the bunk. Give me more and more *Mme. Storey*; I like them and I think football stories the bunk.

I think your magazine is great; I wouldn't stop without it. I have been a reader for years. At about ten, I guess, I started with the *All-Story* weekly.

You keep changing the name, but please don't change the inside. I like all your impossible stories and hope Ray Cummings keeps it up. I also like *Gillian Hazeltine* and *Semi Dual*.

MRS. BLANCHE HUGHES.

"THE Albino Ogre" made these ARGOSY converts:

Detroit, Mich.

We have been ARGOSY readers for a comparatively short time, having only started last July, but we just couldn't keep from writing.

Our favorite authors are—varied: Fred MacIsaac, H. Bedford-Jones, J. Allan Dunn and Lieut. John Hopper. Detective: George Worts and Frank L. Packard. Western: W. C. Tuttle and Clem Yore. Impossible: Erle Stanley Gardner, Ray Cummings and Otis Adelbert Kline.

F. V. W. Mason and W. Wirt are to be congratulated on their fine work. For short stories Theodore Roscoe and John A. Thompson can't be beat.

We have just read our first stories by Richard Barry and T. S. Stribling, which were good. Let's hear more from them.

Once in 1928 we picked up an old ARGOSY which had "The Albino Ogre," by Anthony M. Rud. We enjoyed it very much. Last July we saw the ARGOSY and suddenly remembered "The Albino Ogre." We took a copy and have been ARGOSY readers ever since.

Three cheers for ARGOSY.

SIDNEY AND SAM KAPLAN.

ANOTHER variety enthusiast:

Carnegie, Pa.

Have been a reader of ARGOSY since 1912 and am perfectly satisfied with the magazine

as it is. For awhile there were just a few too many Western stories, but I believe now you have about the right proportion. It gets tiresome reading all one kind; variety is the spice of life, also of stories.

E. G. NOAH.

NORTHERN stories, but no fantasies would suit this reader:

Toledo, Ohio.

I have been reading ARGOSY off and on for two years and have read so many comments on the "Atoms" stories I would like to give you mine. Stories of that type are a lot of bosh. Too many impossible things done. Too unreal. Let us hear more real life stories, such as "Three of a Kind," by Frank J. Schindler. More power to him. Victor Lauriston and W. De Cartier did a nice piece of work with "The Phantom Mine." I love those Northern stories. Let us have more of them.

PAUL C. MORRIS.

IN the March 22 issue Charles Alden Seltzer will be back with an excellent Northern serial:

Lexington, Ky.

I have been reading ARGOSY for about fifteen years with much enjoyment.

Your Western stories are my favorites. *Jimmy Cordie* and his gang next, by W. Wirt. Stories of the old South as "The Hawk of Hazard." Stories by Loring Brent are excellent, as are Theodore Roscoe, John Hopper and Fred MacIsaac.

I also like your *Hazeltine* and *Mme. Storey* tales.

"The Gun Crusade," "War Above the Timber Line," "The WH Brand," and now comes Clem Yore with "The Law in Fraternity," were good. When do we get another by Charles Alden Seltzer?

I do not like your impossible or futuristic stories such as "The Princess of the Atom," "Maza of the Moon," "The Snow Girl" and such. However, I'll keep buying the magazine if you don't get too many impossible.

AL SPRINGATE.

SOMETIMES we sorta wish more readers felt like Mr. Gorman:

Wauregan, Conn.

In looking over "Argonotes" I notice that some of the readers are great at picking out flaws in one way or another, as in Robert Terry Shannon's "Almost a Gentleman." Also a criticism by Mr. Bell, which brought an answer much to the point and showed him up badly. Now I wish to say that I was very

much pleased with "Almost a Gentleman." What is more, an oversight is hardly an error and if we stop and think of the little ten cents we pay we should be ashamed to find fault.

Oscar J. Friend has one of the best tales I have read this year in "Hawk of Hazard."

I hate a fault finder above all things—I might say crab to be more up to date—but it takes all kinds to make a world and the critic has, like every one else, his rights. Uncasy lies the head that wears a crown applies to the editor as well as the king, and I sometimes think that an editor is much like a baseball umpire who can never give complete satisfaction. In six months I have only cast one tale aside, and that one is "The Princess of the Atom."

Far be it from me to pan any writer's work. Why? Well, I am only one, and what is poison to me is perhaps meat for some one else. I have my likes and dislikes as to reading, but I cannot expect the editor to favor me. Four years ago ARGOSY published two serials of the *Roundsman McCarthy* type, and to me they were immense. Will there ever be any more of that kind? Who knows! Well, I may or may not be given space, but in closing I can only say "Vive Le Roi!" for ARGOSY is the king.

JOSEPH GORMAN.

YOUR CHOICE COUPON

Editor, ARGOSY,
280 Broadway, N. Y. C., N. Y.

The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

I did not like _____
because _____

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____

8-1



Looking Ahead!

LOOTERS' LUCK

THE South Seas—adventure—romance—a fortune in pearls—intrigue and bitter struggle—all these are woven into this latest two-part story from the pen of

J. Allan Dunn

GOLD BLINDNESS

ONE of the most unusual novelettes we ever published is this strange tale of a man who had to choose between love and fortune. It is a story come out of the desert—a "whispering" tale by

Erle Stanley Gardner

COMING TO YOU IN THE ARGOSY OF MARCH 8th